

WATCHMEN

by David Heyter

BLACK. The blackness SPLITS into symmetrical BLACK SHAPES on a SILVER-WHITE B/G -- like a Rorschach test. *

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Rorschach's journal, October 12th.

It's late. Getting cold.

Camera PULLS BACK: The Speaker is a man, wearing a Fedora, trenchcoat, and a MASK OF SILVER-WHITE material -- within which EVER-SHIFTING BLOBS OF BLACK create flowing PATTERNS.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)

It didn't used to be like this.

Once, heroes walked these streets.

CUT WIDE: RORSCHACH stands on a high ROOFTOP, walking toward the long drop as the blazing sun SETS. An AIRSHIP, a dirigible labelled COMMUTER EXPRESS slides silently across the sky. His feet totter on the windy EDGE of the drop. *

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)

But they outlawed us. Made us the criminals. So we retired. We grew old. Complacent and soft. *

The man STEPS OFF THE LEDGE. Camera RUSHES FORWARD TO SHOW that he is DROPPING RAPIDLY TO THE GROUND ON A NARROW WIRE.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)

Well... Most of us anyway. *

INT. EDWARD BLAKE'S APARTMENT -- KITCHEN -- NIGHT

SLOW FADE IN ON: A LAPEL PIN. Yellow, round, depicting the common "Have A Nice Day" HAPPY FACE. SMOKE rises between our vantage point and the empty, smiling face.

No. Not smoke... steam.

CUT WIDE TO: A MAN in his early sixties, though you couldn't tell by his well-muscled build. The HAPPY-FACE PIN adorns the left lapel of an EXPENSIVE SILK HOUSECOAT.

His name is EDWARD BLAKE. But we will come to know him better as THE COMEDIAN. Cable TENDONS FLEX in his forearm as he reaches for the boiling KETTLE. *

CLOSE ON: His GREYING MOUSTACHE, blowing STEAM off the mug. *

INT. EDWARD BLAKE'S APARTMENT -- LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Edward Blake's Penthouse looks out over Central Park. The view alone is cost-prohibitive. He lives well, if alone. He puts his feet up in a plush leather chair and clicks a nearby REMOTE. An incredible SOUND SYSTEM begins to play a RICH TENOR VOICE at great volume. He closes his eyes to listen.

CRASH -- The FRONT DOOR EXPLODES OPEN, splintering.

Edward Blake stands. We see his face clearly for the first time. He is tanned and fit, handsome but for A LONG SCAR that runs from the right corner of his mouth to his ear, giving him the impression of an impossibly-wide smirk. He sees the intruder's face -- though we never do -- and nods.

ANGLE: On the intruder's FEET, entering. Deliberate, slow.

EDDIE

Figured you'd come here eventually.

INTRUDER

(whispered)

You were right. You've always been right.

Blake nods, resigned. Moving with sudden, blinding speed, Eddie WHIPS the SAUCER from under his cup, sending it FLYING like a circular saw-blade across the room.

The intruder bats it harmlessly out of the air with an even more dazzling display of casual reflex, but it buys Eddie time to get to the WALL, where he pulls an ornamental, wood-carved Indonesian BLOW-GUN from it's mount.

Not strictly ornamental we see, as Eddie BLOWS A DART into the LEG of the now-approaching intruder -- who CRIES OUT, pulling the dart out and flicks it INTO EDDIE'S CHEST.

Then, Eddie is on him -- fighting not like an old man, but like the seasoned, Special-Forces veteran that he is.

But the intruder is even faster. Younger. Tougher.

Where Eddie's blows are devastating, his opponent's are sleek, quick, deadly. Struck over his EYE, BLOOD trickles into Eddie's vision -- and in quick succession -- the hollows of both SHOULDERS -- disabling his arms -- and his THROAT, causing his breath to WHISTLE through a swelling wind-pipe.

Eddie falls back against the window-wall. He knows what comes next. Eddie forces words through his abused throat.

EDDIE

You'll -- never -- pull it off.

THE INTRUDER LOOMS, back-lit, FACE hidden in shadow.

INTRUDER

We'll see.

The intruder drives the toe of his BOOT into Eddie's Solar Plexus, incapacitating him. In an incredible display of strength, he LIFTS EDDIE OVER HIS HEAD -- AND THROWS HIM THROUGH THE PENTHOUSE WINDOW. Eddie makes his long, last trip to the ground floor. He never makes a sound.

EXT. EDWARD BLAKE'S BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON: EDDIE'S HAPPY-FACE PIN, SPINNING SLOWLY THROUGH THE AIR -- To SPLASH into the BLOOD which already FLOODS the gutter. A BLOOD SPLOTCH mars the yellow face in a shape that calls to mind two CLOCK HANDS, marking the time of TWELVE MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT as the TITLE CARD SHEARS ACROSS FRAME: *

WATCHMEN

From the PIN, CAMERA ANGLES UP ON: THE HIGH-RISE BUILDING.

INT. EDWARD BLAKE'S APARTMENT -- HOURS LATER

DETECTIVE BOURQUIN peers cautiously out the penthouse window.

BOURQUIN

That's quite a drop. Did you see the body? The victim --

(reading the report)

Edward Blake, was built like a truck. Looked like he'd've put up a hell of a fight. *

Detective Fine examines a framed PHOTO of Blake shaking hands with the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

FINE (V.O.)

Let's keep this one quiet.

EXT. EDWARD BLAKE'S BUILDING -- NIGHT

Bourquin and Fine exit into the cold October night. Fine lights a CIGARETTE with an odd, GLASS, BULB-FILTER.

BOURQUIN

What are you thinking?

FINE

(shrugs)

Rich guy, diplomatic work...

They head down the street. Coming the other way, a filthy grizzled HOMELESS MAN approaches. His face is buried by a thick BEARD and he carries a SIGN reading: THE END IS NEAR.

BOURQUIN

You think Rorschach might get involved.

FINE

I never said that word.

Bourquin nods, then SHUDDERS, pulling up his coat-collar. SLOW PUSH IN ON the sign: THE END IS NEAR.

EXT. EDWARD BLAKE'S BUILDING -- NIGHT

WIDE ANGLE ON: BLAKE'S STREET, which is entirely deserted, though a BANK BUILDING CLOCK only reads 11:48. WALKING BOOTHEELS click loud and slow through the empty street-canyon. So we CUT TO: THE OPPOSITE ANGLE.

The MAN in a TRENCHCOAT and FEDORA walks slowly through the spotlights of the streetlamps, framed by the deserted avenue.

By the rusty STAIN of EDWARD BLAKE'S BLOOD, he CROUCHES. CLOSE ON: THE HAPPY-FACE PIN, picked up by a GLOVED HAND.

Rorschach looks up at Blake's building, face SHADOWED by his low-slung hat brim. He pulls a GRAPPLING GUN the size of a hair-dryer from the folds of his coat.

He FIRES the HOOK AND CABLE THIRTY STORIES UP -- where it LATCHES onto Blake's smashed WINDOW-SILL. Rorschach WALKS UP THE SIDE OF THE BUILDING.

INT. EDWARD BLAKE'S APARTMENT -- LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

ANGLE ON: THE SHATTERED WINDOW-WALL -- Howling, 30-story WINDS shriek past as Rorschach crawls over the sill. Deadly silent, he begins his own investigation.

Rorschach notices the BLOW-GUN, mounted on the wall again. Examining it, he finds the bore empty, but the mouth-piece has a dried SALIVA-STAIN on it. On the mantle beside the blow-gun, is a BOX of the same carved wood. In the box are DARTS, and a CANNISTER which reads: Stun Neurotoxin 2448, Pentagon 3 -- *CLASSIFIED RELEASE ONLY*

Rorschach looks from this -- into the open bedroom door. Through the doorway, he can see an OPEN CLOSET.

INT. BLAKE'S APARTMENT -- BEDROOM CLOSET -- NIGHT

The police have already rifled through Eddie's clothing and personal effects. Rorschach ignores it all, running his fingers along the wall-seams of the closet. At the HANGER-SUPPORT BAR, he pauses. He PUSHES the bar, which SLIDES BACK TO REVEAL a RED BUTTON. *

Pressing it, the BACK WALL of the closet SLIDES OPEN, revealing a SECRET COMPARTMENT. The first thing we see is an old FRAMED PHOTO of EIGHT PEOPLE IN COSTUMES. Their hair and photo-style indicate the photo was taken in the late 1950's.

WEAPONS of all kinds adorn the walls in here. TEAR-GAS, GRENADES, RIFLES, PISTOLS -- if it can kill you: Eddie's got it. But that's not what draws Rorschach's attention.

On the back wall, dead center, is a UNIFORM. Black, leather armor, gloves, boots -- and hanging over it all like a vacant, grinning face -- A black leather MASK.

HOLLIS (V.O.)

I don't know what possessed me to put that on mask the first time...

INT. HOLLIS MASON'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A FRAMED PHOTO -- identical to the one in Eddie Blake's closet. As HOLLIS MASON speaks, we PAN ACROSS various FRAMED MEMORABILIA: The first is a NEWSPAPER CLIPPING dated 1953: MYSTERIOUS MASKED MAN CLEANS UP WHARFS.

HOLLIS (V.O.)

It started with the villains. People forget that. Pirate outfits, ghosts, gangs that thought it was funny to dress up and pull heists, crap like that. *

PAN ACROSS: Another FRAMED CLIPPING, dated 1960: NITE OWL FORMS MINUTEMEN -- COSTUMED HEROES COMBINING FORCES! "We're going to clean up this town!" says costumed crusader. *

HOLLIS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

So a few cops, we decide it might be funny to mask up too. Use the anonymity to take these guys on at street level, right? Well that worked out pretty good. Solved quite a few old grudges. *

PAN ACROSS: A GOLD STATUE -- of NITE OWL in his fifties-era costume. The plaque below reads: IN GRATITUDE, 1969.
Another CLIPPING: 'HERO RETIRES -- Opens own auto business.'

ANGLE ON: HOLLIS MASON -- 70's, though his eyes sparkle with strength and his face still shows the edges of a born hero.

HOLLIS (CONT'D)

So that was the beginning. Of the
fads, the pretenders, all the men
in suits. For better or worse.

*
*

ANGLE ON: DAN DREIBERG -- Late 30's, handsome though he has let himself go the past few years. His edges have gone soft.

DAN

For better.

EXT. HOLLIS MASON'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Hollis sees Dan to the front door of his run-down apartment over an auto-mechanic's shop.

*

HOLLIS

You know it's a shame they put you
kids out to grass ten years back.
You were a far better Night Owl
than I ever was.

DAN

That's why I took the name.

*
*

HOLLIS

That's why I gave it to you,
smartass.

*
*
*

Dan waves amiably, descends the stairs. He pulls up his collar against the cold and walks down an alley. CAMERA REMAINS on Dan's back, while in the F/G: we PAN DOWN to a SIGN: MASON AUTO REPAIRS -- *"Obsolete models a specialty!"*

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*

EXT. CITY STREETS -- NIGHT

DAN walks the empty streets to his upscale TOWNHOUSE. He pauses. His front door hangs slightly ajar. The LOCK has been BROKEN. A LIGHT burns inside.

*
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*

INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Cautious, quiet, Dan approaches his kitchen. The LIGHT is coming from in there -- and odd metal, scraping SOUNDS.

INT. DAN'S KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

RORSCHACH sits at the table. He quickly pulls his mask down, *
having just polished off a cold can of BEANS.

RORSCHACH
Hello Daniel.

DAN
Rorschach...

RORSCHACH
Got hungry waiting. Helped myself
to some beans. You don't mind?

DAN
'Course not. Uh, you want me to *
heat some up for you?

Dan circles the table, watching his old friend. *

RORSCHACH
No need. *

DAN
Long time no see. How have you *
been keeping?

RORSCHACH
Out of prison. So far. Take a
look at this.

He tosses the SMILEY-FACE PIN onto the table. Dan picks it
up, runs his fingers over the RED-BROWN SPLOTCH.

DAN
This little stain. Is that bean
juice, or...

Rorschach laughs, soft. *

RORSCHACH
Sure. Human bean juice. Badge *
belonged to the Comedian. Blood *
too. He's dead. *

DAN
The Comedian? *
(looks out the window) *
Let's talk downstairs.

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- NIGHT

LONG DOLLY SHOT: TRACKING BACK, following the two men as they descend the stairs, gradually revealing Dan's "WORKSHOP". A dusty basement filled with the wondrous remnants of a superhero's LAB. Old COMPUTERS, an OWL-COSTUME in A GLASS DISPLAY-CASE. In the room's center, some OVAL-SHAPED VEHICLE roughly the size of a subway car is covered by a dusty TARP.

DAN

You haven't been down here in a while.

RORSCHACH

Neither have you. Lot of dust.

DAN

Doesn't seem much point since I retired. Listen, about the Comedian, it was probably just a burglary. Maybe the killer didn't know who Blake was.

RORSCHACH

An ordinary burglar; kill the Comedian? Ridiculous.

DAN

I guess it doesn't seem too likely. I'd heard he'd been working for the government since they passed the Keene Act. Maybe it was a political killing.

RORSCHACH

Maybe... Or maybe someone's killing off masked heroes.

DAN

You don't think that's... maybe a little paranoid?

Rorschach leans heavily against a desk, his masked face shifting, changing.

RORSCHACH

Is that what they're saying about me now, that I'm paranoid? The Comedian was active for forty years. Men like us make enemies.

Rorschach walks toward the back of the basement area -- to the MOUTH OF A LARGE TUNNEL leading into inky darkness.

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

Anyway. Thought I'd let you know,
in case someone's killing masks.
Better go. Things to do.

DAN

Yeah, well, the tunnel lets you out
in a warehouse two blocks north.

RORSCHACH

I remember. Used to come here a
lot... back when we were partners.

DAN

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Those were great
times, Rorschach. Great times.
Whatever happened to them, eh?

Rorschach disappears into the black tunnel.

RORSCHACH

You quit.

INT. DAN'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Troubled now, Dan sits on the phone at the kitchen table, an
ADDRESS BOOK open to a LISTING -- ADRIAN VEIDT -- (Rameses?)

EXT. VEIDT ENTERPRISES -- NIGHT

A mammoth, shining SKYSCRAPER. At the 50th floor is a HUGE V-
SHAPED HOLE where WATER FALLS. A digital PHONE is RINGING.

INT. DAN'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Sweat beads on Dan's forehead. A silky female VOICE answers.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Veidt Enterprises.

DAN

I need to speak with Adrian Veidt.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

I'm sorry sir, Mr. Veidt cannot be
reached through this number.

Dan eyes the note next to Adrian's name. Rameses?

DAN

Ah. Because I... uh, Rameses?

OPERATOR (V.O.)

One moment please.

INT. ADRIAN VEIDT'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

The office is ENORMOUS. Wide marble floors, decorated in a blend of modern America and ancient Egypt. Looking out the window is the MAN who owns it all: The office, the building, a significant chunk of the city. ADRIAN VEIDT, formerly known as OZYMANDIAS. He speaks to a SPEAKER-PHONE. Next to the phone sits an ACTION-FIGURE of Veidt in his old costume.

ADRIAN

Rorschach? You saw him?

DAN

Yeah, the light's pretty good in my kitchen,. He said someone murdered the Comedian.

ADRIAN

The Comedian? Why?

DAN

You're the World's Smartest Man, Adrian. You tell me.

ADRIAN

Given his... "diplomatic" work, I'd assume a political killing. The North Koreans maybe --

DAN

I said the same thing, but... Rorschach suspects a mask-killer. Some old enemy with a grudge.

ADRIAN

Rorschach's a romantic. He's also psychotic, living in the past. The Comedian had enemies. The man was practically a Nazi.

DAN

Either way, someone should tell Jon and Laurie... Warn them, maybe.

ADRIAN

(laughs)

Warn Jon? Tell the indestructible man that someone plans to murder him? I'll take care of it. Nice to hear from you Dan.

INT. DAN'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Dan stares at the stained SMILEY-FACE PIN.

DAN

Sure. Have a nice day.

EXT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE -- NIGHT

A SPOTLIGHT flashes over a SIGN posted on a RAZOR-WIRE FENCE: ROCKEFELLER MILITARY RESEARCH CENTER. An M16-toting SENTRY walks past A HANGAR-LIKE BUILDING labelled SPECIAL TALENT QUARTERS. Again, a PHONE is RINGING.

INT. SPECIAL TALENT QUARTERS -- NIGHT

PAN ACROSS: A HUGE ROOM, four stories high, which contains various MILITARY DEVICES of a technology beyond our imagination. Distorted in the sections of GLASS, we see the indistinct REFLECTION of a MAN, GLOWING BRIGHT BLUE.

CLOSE ON: A PHONE, ringing softly. A HAND reaches into frame. The HAND emits STREAMS OF VAPOROUS BLUE ENERGY.

DR. MANHATTAN (O.S.)

Hello Adrian. It's been a long time.

INT. SPECIAL TALENT QUARTERS -- GYM -- LATER

CLOSE ON: LAURIE JUPITER, the former WRAITH, glares through hanging strands of sweat-soaked hair. She is in her late 20's, her beauty and strength fueled by inexhaustible anger. She ATTACKS, striking a life-like PUNCHING MANNEQUIN with an impossible series of kicks and strikes.

BEHIND HER, the door opens. BLUE LIGHT floods the GYM AREA.

For the first time, we see all of DR. MANHATTAN (aka Jonathan Osterman). He is shirtless. VAPOROUS, BLUE ENERGY surges from every edge and corner of his powerful body. In a world of actual superheroes, he is a thousand steps beyond the rest -- nearly a god. So close in fact, that even he can not make the distinction sometimes. And that's going to be a problem. A big one. For everybody.

Before she can strike again, he puts a hand on her shoulder.

DR. MANHATTAN

Someone murdered the Comedian.

She takes this in. Nods.

LAURIE

Good.

She spins, DRIVING HER HEEL into the dummy's head.

INT. SPECIAL TALENT QUARTERS -- BEDROOM -- LATER

CLOSE ON: A BLANK COMPUTER SCREEN. A hyper-advanced Mac. PAN AROUND to reveal that the computer's INTERNAL COMPONENTS ARE FLOATING IN MIDAIR -- held aloft by Dr. Manhattan's gaze.

DR. MANHATTAN'S POV: The Floating Pieces PIXILLATE and we see the world as Jon sees it: BILLIONS UPON BILLIONS OF PARTICLES. Using only his mind, Jon subtly REARRANGES the micro-structure of the pieces. Improving it.

Laurie appears in the bathroom doorway, wearing a RED SILK CAMISOLE. She looks very good -- obviously having prepared herself for this moment. Dr. Manhattan doesn't look up. Ticked, Laurie crosses to a small fridge and cracks a BEER.

LAURIE

What's Dan Dreiberg up to?

DR. MANHATTAN

Hmm?

LAURIE

Dan. You said he called Adrian.

DR. MANHATTAN

He's... reading a magazine. On birds, I believe.

LAURIE

I think maybe I'll call him. If... you don't mind, that is.

But he doesn't answer. Frustrated, Laurie exits. Jon looks up for a moment, watching her go knowingly, sadly.

INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE -- NIGHT

Laurie is on the phone.

DAN (V.O.)

Laurie Jupiter? God, it's been forever. How's Jon?

IN DAN'S LIVING ROOM: Dan puts his OWL MAGAZINE aside.

LAURIE can see edges of Jon's BLUE LIGHT down the hall.

LAURIE

Jon? Oh, you know... He's perfect.

EXT. VARIOUS -- NIGHT

VARIOUS SHOTS of THE CITY. For the first time, we see just how different it is from the America we know. Framed by towering DECO SKYSCRAPERS, blimp-style AIRSHIPS cruise silently by, ferrying commuters to the outer boroughs.

On the streets, ELECTRIC CARS zip here and there with no more sound than a hornet's buzz. One MAN has pulled over at a NEWS-STAND to buy a paper while his car charges up at a four-foot high CHARGING STATION POST on the corner. VARIOUS BILLBOARDS advertise products we have not heard of: Candies. Many PERFUME ADS for a scent called NOSTALGIA, electric cars - at the bottom of most is the name VEIDT ENTERPRISES.

Collar up, hat pulled low, RORSCHACH walks the streets.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Rorschach's Journal, October 13th.
Picking over the case, I walked the streets of the city I once loved.
The city that had turned on us. A rare jewel turned cheap glass.

A HOOKER approaches him... until she sees his "face."

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)

I was offered French love, Japanese love... But no American love.
American love. Just like Coke in green glass bottles...

INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE -- BEDROOM -- NIGHT

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

They don't make it anymore.

Laurie lies in bed, ignored. Jon continues to work on the computer. His blue light ripples across Laurie's face as if she were underwater. Pissed, she rolls over to sleep.

INT. LAURIE'S DREAM -- BANQUET HALL -- NIGHT

Ten years ago. Politicians and military types in suits mingle. EDWARD BLAKE talks with a group of men on a dark, secluded BALCONY.

EDDIE BLAKE

So I told him, "Look pal, I have no idea who killed the Shah -- just don't ask me where I was when I heard about JFK."

The Politicos laugh uproariously and puff their cigars.

CIGAR PUFFING MAN

That's great. The President'll love that. Y'know Ed, you're okay. Not like Mr. Spock over there, giving everyone the creeps.

The man turns to gesture at JON who sits at a far table. LAURIE stands behind the cigar smoker. Angry and drunk.

CIGAR PUFFING MAN (cont'd)

Miss Jupiter...

EDDIE BLAKE

Good to see you, kid.

LAURIE

I wish I could say the same.

EDDIE BLAKE

Y'know, I just have to look at you I see your mom. She was a peach.

LAURIE

Did you tell her that before you tried to rape her?

Laurie says this loud. The people nearby go silent.

CIGAR PUFFING MAN 2

Miss Jupiter, please --

The man touches her shoulder. Without looking, Laurie TWISTS the hand, CRUSHING the cigar in a hail of sparks.

CIGAR PUFFING MAN 3

Somebody get her boyfriend.

LAURIE

Before you hit her? Before you choked her? Isn't that the way you treat peaches?

EDDIE BLAKE

You sure you want to take this all the way?

LAURIE

Damn straight. What kind of man
are you to force a woman into
having sex against her will?

Eddie looks genuinely indignant.

EDDIE BLAKE

Only once.

Laurie is aghast. She THROWS HER DRINK IN HIS FACE.
Suddenly, DAN is there, in costume, taking her arm.

DAN

Come on, Laurie.

He walks her away. Eddie brushes it off, laughing.

CIGAR PUFFING MAN

(under his breath)

Her mother was a whore.

Dan stops. Now Laurie tries to pull him away.

LAURIE

Just forget it. Let's go.

DAN

Tell her you're sorry.

CIGAR PUFFING MAN

Or what, Owl-man? You'll hit me?

DAN

Yeah.

CIGAR PUFFING MAN

You'll go to prison.

DAN

You'll go to the ICU.

Nervous, the man looks from Dan to Eddie. Eddie looks down --
"You're on your own, pal." The man makes a wise decision.

CIGAR PUFFING MAN

Ms. Jupiter, I sincerely apologize
for any injury my ill-advised
comments may have caused you.

LAURIE

Why thank you, Mr. Dumont. You're
a beacon.

Laughing, she takes Dan's arm and walks away. From the table, JON watches the whole thing.

EXT. BANQUET HALL -- LATER

Laurie walks alone and depressed outside the hall. Hearing something, she looks into a dark ALLEY -- just in time to find EDDIE striding back into the light. He sees her and looks down. He walks away, whistling a bright little tune.

Laurie peers into the dark alley, almost seeing...

INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE -- BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Before she can see, Laurie WAKES. Jon is still working.

EXT. CEMETERY -- LATE AFTERNOON

Heavy rain. Day turned to black night. The same filthy, bearded HOMELESS MAN carries his SIGN past the gates of a cemetery. Parked before the gates are a line of LIMOUSINES. PAN PAST: A STATUE -- a stone angel, rainwater tears streaming down her cheeks -- TO REVEAL: Dan, Jon, Adrian, and other mourners line the edge of an open grave.

DAHLIA (V.O.)

What brings you to the city of the dead?

Throughout this scene we INTERCUT between THE FUNERAL and:

EXT. NEPENTHE GARDENS -- DAY

Bright sunshine. California. An upscale condo facility. Laurie's mother, Dahlia -- 55 with a strong, bright strength in her eyes -- reclines by the pool. In her day, she was the SILK SPECTRE.

LAURIE

What, I can't visit without the third degree? I'm not a perp mom.

DAHLIA

Then have a Margarita. Where's the human H-bomb?

Laurie pours herself a Margarita from a pitcher on the table.

LAURIE

Please stop calling him that. Jon's at some funeral I didn't feel like attending, so he teleported me to California. I just got through throwing up in the ladies room.

DAHLIA

Eddie Blake's funeral, isn't it?

Laurie merely sips her drink.

DAHLIA

I'm not blind, Laurie. The paper said he was murdered.

OVERHEAD ANGLE: As Eddie's coffin is removed from the hearse.

Dahlia (cont'd) (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Guess he finally got his punchline, eh? Poor Eddie.

LAURIE

(pissed)

Poor Eddie? How can you say that, after he almost --

DAHLIA

Laurie. You're young. What happened, happened forty years ago.

ANGLE ON: EDDIE'S COFFIN, carried past Jon, Adrian, Dan.

Dahlia (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It's history.

LAURIE

So's Dachau.

Dahlia reaches into an oversized, leopard-print purse, withdrawing a SMALLER VERSION of the OLD HEROES PHOTO.

DAHLIA

That makes just three of the old team left. Me, Hollis Mason. Poor Byron Lewis up in the bughouse.

LAURIE

Look, I'm not saying you should curl up and whimper about it for the rest of your life. I'm just saying...

EXT. CEMETERY -- LATE AFTERNOON

LAURIE (V.O.)

Sometimes you need to see people
for what they are.

PUSH IN ON: ADRIAN VEIDT, listening to Edward Blake's eulogy.

PREACHER (O.S.)

"In the midst of life, we are in
death."

CLOSE now, on Adrian's face -- and into his memories:

INT. CRIMEBUSTERS HEADQUARTERS -- NIGHT

EDDIE BLAKE (V.O.)

This is all bullshit.

CAPTAIN METROPOLIS, a pudgy former athlete named NELSON
GARDNER leads a meeting for a potential "hero-team".

RORSCHACH is there. And a very young LAURIE, dressed out in
a combination of LEATHER ARMOR, designed in punk-fashion.
DAN looks fit and trim in his costume. And a younger ADRIAN
VEIDT, dressed as OZYMANDIAS. DR. MANHATTAN stands with his
girlfriend JANEY, though he casts occasional glances at young
Laurie... who glances back.

NELSON GARDNER

What are you saying, Comedian?

Eddie Blake, now in his forties, smokes a cigar, feet on the
table. The PAPER in his hand reads: DR. MANHATTAN AN
"IMPERIALIST WEAPON" SAY RUSSIANS.

EDDIE

What I'm saying, Nelson, is this
whole idea -- this "Crimebusters"
thing, is an idiotic waste of time.
It didn't work twenty years ago,
and it ain't gonna work just
because you want to keep on playing
Cowboys and Indians.

NELSON GARDNER

That's not -- I --

DAN

Hold on, let's not throw the idea
out right away. Rorschach and I
have made headway on the gang
problem by pooling our efforts.

Rorschach steps up. His voice is that of an average guy, not yet the twisted whisper it will become.

RORSCHACH

That's true. But something like this seems too big. Too unwieldy.

ADRIAN

Surely that's an organizational problem. With the right person leading the group --

EDDIE

Oh, and who that would be Ozymandias? I mean you are the smartest guy in the world, right?

ADRIAN

It doesn't take genius to see that the world has problems.

EDDIE

Sure. And it takes a roomful of idiots to think they're small enough for you guys to handle. -- What's going on in this world, you got no idea. You people are a joke. You hear Moloch's back in town and think, "Oh boy! Let's go bust him!" You think that matters?

RORSCHACH

Of course it does. Justice matters.

EDDIE

Justice. Hilarious. Let me show you something.

He approaches a MAP OF AMERICA. On it are Nelson's LABELS, reading PROMISCUITY, BLACK UNREST, ANTI-GOVT DEMOS, DRUGS. Eddie flicks his ZIPPO and the MAP GOES UP IN FLAMES.

NELSON GARDNER

My display --

The Comedian stands before the flames. He points to Jon.

EDDIE

It doesn't matter because the Doc here's got the world's nuclear powers bulking up out of sheer terror. Russia. North Korea. China's making it's move.

(MORE)

EDDIE (cont'd)

The Middle East is getting ready to explode. Again. But this time, we've got more interesting toys to play with. Within twenty years... the nukes are going to be flying like maybugs. -- And then Ozymandias here is gonna be the smartest man on the cinder.

He shakes his head in disgust -- and walks out. *

Silence. Uncomfortable in the wake of the Comedian's truth, the others pack up to go, muttering apologies to Nelson. Everyone but Adrian, who approaches the burning map. *

NELSON GARDNER

Please don't leave. Somebody has to do it. Don't you see? *

CLOSE ON: ADRIAN, flames flickering across his face. *

NELSON GARDNER (cont'd)

Somebody has to save the world.

MATCH FADE TO: *

EXT. CEMETERY -- EARLY EVENING *

The SAME ANGLE on Adrian, staring at Eddie's grave. *

PREACHER (O.S.)

Thou most worthy judge eternal,
suffer us not at our final hour for
pains of death to fall from thee. *

PAN OVER TO: Dr. Manhattan's face we FADE TO: *

INT. BAR -- SAIGON -- NIGHT

ANGLE ON: DR. MANHATTAN'S FACE. Behind him, a BURST of FIRE.

EDDIE BLAKE (O.S.)

Fireworks.

Eddie sits in an empty Saigon bar, mean drunk. Fireworks burst outside and people cheer. Eddie downs his whiskey. *

EDDIE

You'd think this country'd had
enough goddamn fireworks.

Dr. Manhattan looks out at the crowd of cheering Vietnamese.

DR. MANHATTAN

I suppose Vietnam Victory Night
must mean something to them.

EDDIE

Nah. Average Vietnamese don't give
a rat's ass who won. Means plenty
to us. I mean, if we'd've lost
this war... I think it might have
driven us a little crazy, y'know?
As a country. But we didn't,
thanks to you.

DR. MANHATTAN

You sound bitter.

EDDIE

Me? Nah. I just can't wait to get
on that first chopper home.

LIAO LIN

Mr. Eddie?

They both turn. A pretty VIETNAMESE GIRL stands in the door.

EDDIE

Fantastic. Just what I need.

LIAO LIN

The war is over now. I must talk
with you.

EDDIE

There's nothing to talk about. I'm
leaving.

LIAO LIN

You will... walk away?

EDDIE

As fast as I can.

LIAO LIN

But I can not walk away from what
grows in my belly.

Eddie SLAMS his glass down. Squints at her.

EDDIE

Well that's a shame. 'Cause that's
what I'm gonna do. I'm going to
forget you, your ridiculous little
country. All of it.

He turns away. Her eyes blaze.

LIAO LIN

I think you remember. I think you
remember me and my country forever.

Liao Lin SMASHES a bottle. Eddie SPINS just as the broken
SHARDS SLASH HIS FACE, giving him his leering SCAR, which
will last the rest of his life.

EDDIE

God! You bitch! My face!

He PUSHES HER into the bar and DRAWS HIS PISTOL. He glares
over the blood. For a moment, the former lovers stare at
each other across the gun barrel. Silence.

DR. MANHATTAN

Blake... Blake don't.

BANG -- Liao Lin crumples. Eddie turns away.

EDDIE

My face. Got to find a medic.

DR. MANHATTAN

Blake. She was pregnant. You
gunned her down.

Eddie turns on him, spitting fury.

EDDIE

That's right. Pregnant woman.
Gunned her down. Bang. And you
know what? You watched me. You
could've changed the gun into steam
or the bullets into mercury or the
bottle into snowflakes, but you
didn't. You don't give a damn
about human beings. I've been
watching you.

(walking away)

You're drifting out of touch, Doc.
God help us all.

Alone, Dr. Manhattan turns to the girl's body and regards it
appraisingly. FADE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY -- EARLY EVENING

Dr. Manhattan, same position, looks down on Eddie's grave.

PREACHER (O.S.)
Earth to Earth. Ashes to ashes.
Dust to dust.

PAN OVER TO: DAN DREIBERG as we FADE TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS -- NIGHT

Ten years ago: A NEWSPAPER BOX. The headline: COPS SAY: "LET THEM DO IT." Senator Keene proposes emergency vigilantism bill.' PAN UP TO REVEAL: The streets are JAMMED with ANGRY PROTESTORS, waving signs decrying vigilantes.

ANGLE ON: AN OVAL AIRSHIP, it's forward windows sculpted like the eyes of a great owl. Dan, in costume, pilots the ship.

DAN
(over loudspeakers)
EVERYONE, PLEASE CLEAR THE STREETS.
WE ARE TRYING TO RETAIN ORDER UNTIL
THE POLICE STRIKE IS OVER.

A 40's era BLACK SEDAN, old-fashioned and heavy, SCREECHES TO A HALT. The SMILEY-FACE HUBCAPS SPIN PERFECTLY INTO FRAME. The Comedian exits the car, COCKING a large-bore RIFLE.

EDDIE
Listen you overfed sheep! Get back
in your holes before you get hurt!

MAN IN CROWD
WE WANT REGULAR COPS. NO MORE
VIGILANTES.

WOMAN IN CROWD
MY SON IS A COP, ASSHOLE.

The Comedian turns at this -- in time to be hit in the head by a flying SODA CAN. He smiles grimly. He FIRES TEAR GAS CANNISTERS INTO THE CROWD. CLOSE ON: DAN

DAN
Oh God.
(over speakers)
LOOK, I'M SORRY. YOU'VE LEFT US NO
CHOICE. PLEASE CLEAR THE STREETS!

The Comedian DIVES into the crowd, knocking random people aside with his rifle butt. The rougher troublemakers get a rapid, brutal beating they won't soon forget. A LARGE MAN takes a swing at Eddie, drawing the Comedian's focus. He beats the man unmercifully until DAN ELBOWS EDDIE IN THE NECK. The beaten man looks up at Dan, dazed.

DAN (cont'd)

What are you, an idiot? RUN.

The man scatters into the choking fog along with the rest of the crowd. Eddie rises, rubbing his neck, chuckling.

EDDIE

Run, you suckers. Pretty good shot, Dreiberg. I didn't even hear you come up.

DAN

Comedian, this is a nightmare! The whole city is erupting!

EDDIE

Hah. Y'seen this?

The smoke clears enough for Dan to see a message SPRAY-PAINTED on a wall: WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN?

EDDIE (cont'd)

They've been writing that all over the past couple'a weeks. They don't like us and they don't trust us. Where the hell are the others?

DAN

Jon and Laurie are handling the riots in Washington. Rorschach's holding the Lower East Side. He... mostly works on his own these days.

EDDIE

Rorschach's been nuts ever since that kidnapping three years back.

Dan looks down the smoky, deserted street.

DAN

How long can we keep this up?

EDDIE

My government contacts tell me some new Act is being pushed through. Until then, we're society's only protection.

DAN

Protection? Who are we protecting them from?

Eddie laughs, exultant in the blowing smoke. The chaos. Distant screams lace the fog.

EDDIE

Are you kidding? From themselves.

EXT. CEMETERY -- EVENING

As the Preacher continues, Dan fingers the SMILEY FACE PIN.

PREACHER

Lord have mercy upon us. Amen.

Dan DROPS the pin into Eddie's grave. The mourners say their good-byes. CAMERA FOLLOWS: A lone DARK MAN wearing a hat pulled low, as he walks away.

EXT. CEMETERY GATES -- NIGHT

The DARK MAN exits. Behind him, a second SILHOUETTE.

ANGLE ON: THE HOMELESS MAN with his sign: THE END IS NEAR.

EXT. MOLOCH'S BROWNSTONE -- NIGHT

The dark man walks up the steps to his building.

INT. MOLOCH'S BROWNSTONE -- NIGHT

The dark man removes his hat and coat. He is old, withered. He is EDGAR JACOBI. In better days, he was known as MOLOCH.

INT. MOLOCH'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Jacobi pours a cup of tea. The kitchen is dark, quiet. Jacobi takes his mug to the REFRIGERATOR. Opens it. RORSCHACH LEAPS AT HIM FROM INSIDE THE FRIDGE. Jacobi SCREAMS. Rorschach pins him to the wall, arm twisted back.

JACOBI

Please, you've got the wrong person!

RORSCHACH

No. Edgar William Jacobi. Also known as Edgar William Vaughn. Also known as William Edgar Bright... Also known as Moloch.

JACOBI

I don't know what you're talking about! I'm a retired business ma --
AHHH!

Rorschach TWISTS the man's arm.

RORSCHACH

Lie again... I'll break your arm.

JACOBI

Oh God. Please. I spent the
eighties in jail. I'm not Moloch
anymore. What do you want from me?

Rorschach lets go. Jacobi's hollow eyes watch, terrified.

RORSCHACH

Heard you attended a funeral today.

JACOBI

The funeral? I don't know why I
went. I guess I felt I should.
I'd been thinking about the
Comedian since --

Rorschach SLAMS JACOBI against the wall.

JACOBI (cont'd)

What? What did I say?

RORSCHACH

How did you know Edward Blake was
the Comedian?

JACOBI

He broke in here! A week ago. He
had his mask off. He was drunk.

RORSCHACH

You were enemies for forty years.
Why should he visit you?

JACOBI

I don't know! He was upset. I
thought he was going to kill me.

FLASH TO:

INT. MOLOCH'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

EDDIE BLAKE, in costume but for his mask, sits on the edge of
Jacobi's bed. He swigs from a bottle. He is crying. Jacobi
watches him from the darkness, shaking.

EDDIE

It's a joke. S'all a joke. I mean
I thought I knew how the world
worked. And then -- Then I found
out about... this joke.

He stares into Jacobi, red-rimmed eyes blazing wildly.

EDDIE (cont'd)

You're a part of it Moloch, y'know
that? I saw your name on that
list. You, Janey Slater. 'Course
if I thought you *did* know -- if I
thought you might be in on it...
I'd kill you. Y'understand? I
mean, you fought that big blue
freak. You know what his head's
like. Who knows which way he'll
jump if anybody messes with him? I
don't want to think about it. I
don't know. Maybe I can stop it.
But maybe... I shouldn't. God.

He downs the bottle. Fresh tears stream down his face.

EDDIE (cont'd)

I mean, I've done some bad things.
I've done bad things to women. I
shot kids in 'Nam. But I never did
anything like... like this.

Eddie falls to his knees before a CRUCIFIX on the wall.

EDDIE (cont'd)

Oh God. Forgive me...

He suddenly WHIPS the bottle at the cross.

INT. MOLOCH'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

JACOBI

And then he left. I don't know
what the hell it was about.

RORSCHACH

Hm. Funny story. Sounds
unbelievable. Probably true.

JACOBI

So that's it? I'm clean?

RORSCHACH

Clean... You? I searched your house. Found illegal drugs.

JACOBI

Illegal -- I don't use drugs.

Rorschach pulls a PILL BOTTLE from his coat.

RORSCHACH

Laetril. Phony medication made from apricot pits. Illegal.

JACOBI

Oh c -- come on. Look, please don't confiscate that. I'm trying anything. ...I have cancer.

RORSCHACH

What kind of cancer?

JACOBI

You know the kind you eventually get better from?

(beat)

That ain't the kind I've got.

RORSCHACH

... Fine. I wrote down the name of the company. You're off the hook. For now. If you remember anything else, leave me a note in the trash can opposite the Gunga Diner at Fortieth and Seventh. Keep out of trouble, Moloch... I'll be seeing you.

EXT. CITYSCAPE -- NIGHT

SIDE ANGLE ON: RORSCHACH, BLASTING THROUGH THE NIGHT AIR as the city streams by. This close, he appears to be FLYING.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Thought about Moloch's story on my way to the cemetery. Could all be lies. A revenge scheme planned during his years behind bars.

CUT WIDE: To reveal he is actually PERCHED ATOP AN ELEVATED SUBWAY CAR. One of the ways he gets around.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But if it's true, then what?
Puzzling reference to Dr.
Manhattan. Could he possibly be at
risk? So many questions.

Rorschach ZOOMS INTO FRAME, FILLING IT WITH HIS MASK-BLOTS.

EXT. CEMETERY -- NIGHT

Rorschach stands over Eddie's fresh grave.

RORSCHACH
Edward Blake, born 1944. Forty-two
years as the Comedian. Buried in
the rain. That's what happens to
us. Violent lives, ending
violently.

FLASH TO: EDDIE BLAKE, turning as his DOOR is KICKED IN.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)
We never die in bed.

FLASH TO: THE BURNING MAP OF AMERICA

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)
Blake understood. He saw the little
men in masks trying to hold it all
together, treated it like a joke.

FLASHES OF: EDDIE being beaten in his apartment.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)
I heard a joke once. Man goes to a
doctor, says he's depressed. Life
seems harsh and cruel.

EDDIE is KICKED in the stomach.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)
Says he feels all alone in a
threatening world.

EDDIE stands alone in the blowing tear gas smoke.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)
Doctor says, "the treatment is
simple. The great clown Pagliacci
is in town tonight. Go and see
him. That should pick you up."

EDDIE is LIFTED UP by his assailant's hands.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)
The man bursts into tears.

EDDIE, crying before the crucifix.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)
"But doctor," he says.

ULTRA-SLOW, EDDIE CRASHES THROUGH HIS PENTHOUSE WINDOW.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)
"I am Pagliacci."

Eddie FLIES TOWARD FRAME on his silent trip to the ground.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)
Good joke. Everybody laugh...
Curtains.

Eddie BLACKS OUT THE FRAME.

EXT. ALLEY -- NIGHT

A TAGGER SPRAY-PAINTS graffiti on a wall. The SHADOW of a MAN IN A FEDORA falls over him and he turns, terrified.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)
On Friday night, a Comedian died.
Nobody cares.

SAME ALLEY, seconds later. The tagger lies unconscious, BLOOD trickles from his nose as PAINT trickles from the can he's been brained with. RORSCHACH walks away, clearing frame, we see the GRAFFITI scrawled over the inert body.

It reads WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN? In red.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Nobody cares but me.

INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE -- BEDROOM -- EVENING

CLOSE ON: LAURIE, eyes closed with pleasure, Dr. Manhattan's GLOWING BLUE HANDS caress her face.

LAURIE
Mmm. What time's your TV interview?

DR. MANHATTAN (O.S.)
We have plenty of time.

Eyes still closed, she does not see a THIRD BLUE HAND trace a line down her cheek. She kisses it.

LAURIE

Hey, your finger. It's like
licking a battery. It's all --

She opens her eyes. They widen in shock and horror. CUT
WIDE TO REVEAL: TWO DR. MANHATTANS in bed with her.

LAURIE (cont'd)

(jumps up)

Oh God! That's horrible! Stop it!
Be one person again!

The two Jons stand, confused.

DR. MANHATTAN 1

Laurie? Please don't be
upset.

DR. MANHATTAN 2

I thought you'd enjoy it. *

LAURIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. You just startled me.

Laurie backs out of the bedroom into the hall.

DR. MANHATTAN 1

I don't know what stimulates you
anymore.

LAURIE

Please Jon. Forget it. I
overreacted. It was just a little
strange to see --

Laurie can now see into the kitchen, where yet a THIRD DR.
MANHATTAN is working on an experiment.

LAURIE (cont'd)

How long have you been working in
here?

DR. MANHATTAN 1

Laurie, try to understand --

LAURIE

Understand? You're working in here
at the same time we're in bed?

DR. MANHATTAN 3

My work's at an important stage.
It seemed unnecessary to --

LAURIE

Shut up! Just SHUT YOUR MOUTH!

Laurie WHIPS a full BEAKER at Jon 3's chest. It PASSES--
THROUGH HIM harmlessly to SMASH IN THE KITCHEN SINK.

She walks out. D.M. 1 continues to plead with her as D.M. 3
looks to the smashed beaker and it's splashed, colored fluid.

DR. MANHATTAN 1

Laurie, please -- If you think
there's a problem with my attitude,
I'm prepared to discuss it.
Laurie...

As he speaks, the smashed BEAKER and its contents RISE INTO
THE AIR, REASSEMBLING perfectly in the palm of D.M. 3's hand.

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON: DAN, polishing a pair of gold-rimmed GOGGLES with
rose-tinted lenses. Ominous music. He focuses on the work.
We get the impression that he is purposefully not looking up.

But he is compelled. Unable to help himself.

CUT WIDE: Dan is sitting on a crate before THE DISPLAY CASE.
His NIGHT-OWL COSTUME'S empty, hooded eyes stare into him.

BOOM -- The sound echoes through the dark chamber.

BOOM. BOOM... Something coming for him? Maybe.

No. The upstairs door.

EXT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Laurie stands on Dan's front step. Kneeling beside her, a
LOCKSMITH installs a new door lock.

LAURIE

Hey Dan.

DAN

Laurie.. Sorry about the mess, I'm
having a new lock fitted... Are you
alright?

She begins to cry. The lock man focuses on his work.

DAN (CONT'D)

Hey, come on. I mean, whatever it
is... it's not the end of the
world, right?

LAURIE

I left Jon.

INT. DAN'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Dan pours Laurie a glass of red wine. *

LAURIE

Living with him... You don't know
what it's like. *

INTERCUT TO: DR. MANHATTAN, sitting in their bedroom. He is holding Laurie's BRA. Staring at it.

LAURIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

The way he looks at things. Like
he can't remember what they are,
and doesn't particularly care.

LAURIE looks out Dan's window.

LAURIE (cont'd)

This world, the real world. To
him, it's like walking through the
mist, and all the people are just --
Just shadows.

DR. MANHATTAN lowers his head. A SHADOW FALLS OVER HIM. He looks up to see a THREE PIECE SUIT standing on its own before the closet -- waiting for its wearer.

LAURIE looks at Dan through wet lashes.

LAURIE (cont'd)

Oh God. You were probably getting
dressed to go out when I showed up.

DAN

Listen, I just wish you'd stop by
more often. As for tonight, I'm
only calling on Hollis. And hell --

CUT TO: DR. MANHATTAN, stepping THROUGH and INTO the empty suit. His TIE knots itself.

DAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He doesn't care how people dress.

Dr. Manhattan looks around the empty room sadly -- and
DISAPPEARS IN A BURST OF PARTICLES.

LAURIE downs her wine, straightens herself out. *

LAURIE

Come on. I'll walk you to
Hollis's.

EXT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

They exit past the LOCKSMITH.

LOCKSMITH

I'm all through here. You're safe
as houses. What happened anyway?
Y'get robbed?

Dan pays him. Laurie feels the night wind.

DAN

No, uh -- A friend called when I
wasn't expecting him.

LOCKSMITH

Ha! I got buddies like that.
Always turning up drunk.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO -- NIGHT

The ABC TELEVISION STUDIO FOYER. People go about their jobs.
The RECEPTIONIST hears a strange electric CRACKLING.

LOCKSMITH (V.O.)

Completely out of the blue.

Suddenly, DR. MANHATTAN APPEARS in a BURST OF ENERGY. The
receptionist shrieks. A STAGE MANAGER looks out his office.

STAGE MANAGER

Terrific. Dr. Osterman arrives and
no-one thinks to tell me?

RECEPTIONIST

He -- He just --

STAGE MANAGER

Ah geez. We don't have time for
make-up. That blue is far too
light for television.

The LIGHT from Jon's SKIN DARKENS to a DEEPER BLUE.

JON

Is this dark enough?

STAGE MANAGER

Uh, yeah. Yeah, that's fine.

INTERCUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS -- NIGHT

Dan and Laurie walk in silence. They cut through an ALLEY.

ANGLE ON: A LEATHER-CLAD GANG. Spotting them. Following them into the darkness of the alley.

STAGE MANAGER (V.O.)

That's dark enough for my purposes.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO -- CONTINUOUS

A sunglass-wearing FEDERAL AGENT approaches Jon's other side.

AGENT FORBES

Dr. Osterman. My name is Forbes,
Army Intelligence. Here are a list
of no-go areas. If the Geneva
Convention comes up, the official
position is that talks will not
resume until the Chinese agree to
exclude you from the agenda.

The show is called PRESSWATCH, hosted by a glossy man named
CALVIN MILLER. The lights come up.

CALVIN MILLER

He's has been called many things --
Hero. Symbol. Linchpin of our
nation's security. Possibly the
security of the world.

CUT TO DAN and LAURIE in the alley, turning as the gang
members BLOCK THE ALLEYWAY. One of the STREET TOUGHS flips
open a BUTTERFLY KNIFE with flashing menace. Laurie and Dan
exchange looks. Dan removes his glasses.

ANGLE ON: CALVIN MILLER

CALVIN MILLER (cont'd)

But for the next sixty minutes,
Presswatch has got him. Please
welcome the former Dr. Manhattan --
Dr. Jonathan Osterman.

The audience claps furiously as Jon takes his seat.

DR. MANHATTAN

Thank you.

CALVIN MILLER

Thank you for being here Dr. Osterman. Since we announced this appearance, our phones have been jam-packed. I'd like to skip the preliminaries and get right down to the calls.

DR. MANHATTAN

Fine.

ANGLE ON: DAN AND LAURIE, surrounded by punks.

CALVIN MILLER (V.O.)

Let's get down to it, shall we? *

Dan and Laurie DIVE INTO the gang, fighting like the heroes they once were. The punk's KNIFE goes flying.

PUSH IN ON: CALVIN MILLER'S call-in PHONE.

DOUG ROTH (V.O.)

Dr. Osterman, my name is Doug Roth, I write for a paper called the "Nova Express." I wonder if you remember the name Wally Weaver. In the early days, the papers called him "Dr. Manhattan's buddy." *

DR. MANHATTAN

Wally was a good friend. I attended his funeral.

DOUG ROTH (V.O.)

Yes, he died of cancer ten years ago, wasn't it? I believe it was quite sudden and painful.

ANGLE ON: LAURIE, driving a FIST into a gang member's NOSE.

ANGLE ON: A GANG MEMBER, as he draws a PISTOL ON HER. DAN SEES THE GUN. His eyes harden.

ANGLE ON: CALVIN MILLER. *

DOUG ROTH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

How about Edgar Jacobi, aka Moloch? Isn't it true that you encountered him many times in battles, conflicts --

ANGLE ON: DAN, snapping the GUNMAN'S wrist back and up, so the barrel is aimed at the thug's chin. In the last fraction of a second, Dan shifts the gun two inches left as it FIRES, deafening the gunman, but leaving him alive.

DOUG ROTH (V.O.) (cont'd)
Whatever it is you super-people do.

ANGLE ON: DR. MANHATTAN, listening. Where is this going? *

CALVIN MILLER
Caller. What's your point?

ANGLE ON: THE AUDIENCE, where a BLOND MAN with a CELL-PHONE stands. DOUG ROTH is in the audience. His voice DOUBLES, emitting from the phone and the stands at the same time.

DOUG ROTH
Dr. Osterman, did you know that Mr. Jacobi also has terminal cancer?

ANGLE ON: DR. MANHATTAN, shocked.

DR. MANHATTAN
Moloch? No, I -- didn't know.

ANGLE ON: AGENT FORBES, in the wings. Getting uncomfortable.

CALVIN MILLER
Mr. Roth, we don't normally take questions from the aud --

DOUG ROTH
Janey Slater. Linked romantically to you in the seventies and eighties. Cancer as well -- Doctors have given her six months.

The AUDIENCE begins to MURMUR. Calvin Miller notes the Dr. Manhattan's BLUE LIGHT on his skin and backs away.

DR. MANHATTAN
Janey? I wasn't told. Are you suggesting...

Agent Forbes walks onto the set, stands before Jon.

AGENT FORBES
That's it. Interview's over.

ANGLE ON: THE ALLEYWAY, littered with the unconscious bodies of gang members. Laurie and Dan lean back against the wall.

The audience ROARS, angry. Doug Roth yells over it.

DOUG ROTH

I have reports of more than two dozen past associates, similarly afflicted.

A WOMAN in the crowd stands.

TINA PRICE

Dr. Osterman! Tina Price, Washington Post. Are these allegations true?

Forbes tries to drag Jon away. The audience spills out of the stands. Dr. Manhattan is INUNDATED by reporters, questions, FLASHING cameras.

REPORTER

Did you give Ms. Slater cancer by sleeping with her?

DR. MANHATTAN

No. Please let me through.

ANGLE ON: DAN and LAURIE against the wall, breathing hard. Sweat runs down their faces. They look at each other.

ANGLE ON: DR. MANHATTAN, hemmed in by a sea of people.

DOUG ROTH

How does it feel to know that you may have doomed hundreds of people?

DR. MANHATTAN

Please. If everyone would just go away and leave me alone.

Agent Forbes hears the note of warning in his voice.

AGENT FORBES

Everyone, I think it would be safest not to pursue this line of questioning...

TINA PRICE

Dr. Manhattan, how often did you and Miss Slater --

PUSH IN ON: DR. MANHATTAN, as he finally SNAPS. His reverberating voice SLAMS THROUGH THE STUDIO.

DR. MANHATTAN
LEAVE ME ALONE!

Every last person BURSTS INTO PARTICLES. The echoes of Jon's words chime in the hollows of the otherwise empty studio.

EXT. ALLEY -- NIGHT

Dan and Laurie exit the alley, straightening up, making sure they were not seen, trying to play it off.

LAURIE
I should try to find a hotel. *

DAN
You sure you're --

LAURIE
I'm fine.
(laughs)
God. Imagine, us getting mugged.

DAN
Why don't you come by Hollis's with me? Shake off the adrenaline.

LAURIE
No thanks. I've had enough super-hero stuff for one night.
(walking away)
Take care of yourself, Dan. It's a tough world out there.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Laurie lies down on the cheap, hotel bed. She palms a trickle of blood from her lip. She sighs, closes her eyes.

INT. LAURIE'S DREAM -- CRIMEBUSTER'S MEETING -- NIGHT

The end of the Crimebusters meeting. Adrian stares at the burning map. 17 year-old Laurie -- made up hot, dressed in her black, punk-leather guise of THE WRAITH -- stares at the departing Dr. Manhattan. Dan approaches young Laurie. *

DAN
Hey, uh... Wraith. Can I give you a lift home? *

LAURIE
My mom's picking me up. Thanks though, Mr. Owl.

Giggling, she exits. Dan watches her go, bummed.

DAN
It's Night Owl...

EXT. LAURIE'S DREAM -- CRIMEBUSTERS HALL -- NIGHT

Outside, the OWL-SHIP rises out of frame. Rorschach skulks off into the shadows. Jon and Janey get into a Town Car. Young Laurie walks the green-lined path alone.

EDDIE BLAKE (O.S.)
Laurel?

Startled, Laurie turns. Eddie walks out of the shadows.

EDDIE BLAKE (cont'd)
Laurel Jane, right? You're Dahlia
Jupiter's kid.

YOUNG LAURIE
Yeah. You're the Comedian. You
were pretty cool in there.

EDDIE BLAKE
You didn't grow up too bad
yourself. Yep, got your mom's
eyes. Even got that funny little
mole. Hair's different, but
otherwise, you're just like her.

LAURIE
Have you got a light?

Eddie pulls out a ZIPPO with a SMILEY-FACE etched into it.

EDDIE BLAKE
Your mom. She talk about me much?

LAURIE
No. Not much.

EDDIE BLAKE
Heh. Figures.

The lighter's flame goes out. Laurie touches Eddie's hand to cover it from the wind.

DAHLIA (O.S.)
TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF HER.

Dahlia marches toward them from a car at the sidewalk.

EDDIE BLAKE

Hey Sal. Long time no see.

DAHLIA

Not long enough in my book, Eddie.

(to Laurie)

Put that out young lady.

(to Eddie)

And as for you, are there no depths
you won't sink to?

EDDIE BLAKE

Christ we were just talking! Can't
a guy talk to his, you know, his
old friend's daughter? What the
hell do you think I am?

Dahlia drags Laurie roughly to the car and shoves her in.

DAHLIA

I know what you are Eddie. I've
known what you were for twenty-five
years. Don't ever forget that.

EDDIE BLAKE

I thought we worked all that out...

They drive away. Laurie watches Eddie through the window.

INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE -- NIGHT

A young SOLDIER carefully STENCIL-PAINTS A RADIATION SYMBOL
on the door to Jon and Laurie's quarters, beside the words:
DANGER -- QUARANTINE AREA. BEHIND HIM, the dark hall
LIGHTENS with SOFT BLUE LIGHT.

DR. MANHATTAN (O.S.)

What are you doing?

SOLDIER

Ahh! Dr. Osterman... Uh, I was
just painting up this... safety
notice. As ordered.

DR. MANHATTAN

A warning. I see. It seems I'm
incapable of cohabiting with people
either emotionally or physically.
You'd better tell Ms. Jupiter and
your superiors that I am leaving.

SOLDIER

Sir? Leaving?

DR. MANHATTAN

Yes. For Arizona first I think,
and then Mars.

SOLDIER

Mars... I get it. Hey, you know,
you're a regular guy after all --

Jon BURSTS INTO PARTICLES. The kid raises his radio.

SOLDIER (cont'd)

Holy Christ... Sergeant

EXT. GILA FLATS NUCLEAR TESTING FACILITY -- NIGHT

DR. MANHATTAN'S PARTICLES REFORM in the Arizona desert. He walks through a wasted land of dust and crumbling, concrete buildings. A long-dead military facility. Nestled behind a twisted fence is the empty husk of a derelict BAR.

INT. THE BESTIARY -- NIGHT

Dr. Manhattan enters the dilapidated bar, the blue light from his body lighting dust-caked corners, cloth-shrouded chairs. Behind the bar is a CORK-BOARD with old mementos, photos, yellowed cartoons. He removes a PHOTO from the board.

A photo of a young couple, the woman's hair suggesting the early sixties. The man is JON OSTERMAN. Dr. Manhattan, when he was still only human. In the photo, he smiles with young love; while the same man regarding it years later looks nostalgic, sad. Wise beyond his God-given right.

EXT. GILA FLATS NUCLEAR TESTING FACILITY -- NIGHT

Outside again, Jon looks up at the sky, head full of thought. One RED STAR twinkles at him. Mars. He smiles, wistful. And in a BURST OF PARTICLES... he is gone.

EXT. NEWSSTAND -- NIGHT

A RADIATION SYMBOL over the words: FALLOUT SHELTER, printed on a building: THE INSTITUTE FOR EXTRASPATIAL STUDIES.

A NEWSPAPER. A GRAINY PHOTO of Jon screaming on the cover.

NEWSVENDOR

He's gone. New Frontiersman says
it was the Chinese.

ANGLE ON: A NEWSVENDOR in his sixties. He is talking to a young BOY, black, maybe twelve, who is engrossed in a pirate comic book -- not listening in the least. A SHADOW falls across him. He looks up with a chill.

NEWSVENDOR (CONT'D)

Oh. Good afternoon sir.

ANGLE UP ON: THE HOMELESS MAN, wild eyes staring from his filthy, bearded face, doomsday SIGN on his shoulder.

HOMELESS MAN

Is it here yet?

NEWSVENDOR

New Frontiersman? Got it right here, just like always.

HOMELESS MAN

Give me a paper as well.

NEWSVENDOR

How 'bout you? I see the world didn't end yesterday.

HOMELESS MAN

Are you sure?

The Newsy looks up, but the man is already walking away.

LAURIE (V.O.)

What do you mean he's gone?

INT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY BASE -- BEDROOM -- NIGHT

SOLDIERS in RADIATION SUITS go about the bedroom, bagging Jon and Laurie's personal effects. AGENT FORBES oversees it all.

AGENT FORBES

I mean he had a meltdown and teleported a whole studio full of people into a parking lot. Now he's gone. Ms. Jupiter, did you place Dr. Osterman under any emotional stress last night?

LAURIE

Are you trying to blame me for --

AGENT FORBES

Ma'am, I'm trying to ascertain --

LAURIE

I have had it! When Jon gets back,
we're moving out of this rat-maze --

AGENT FORBES

Listen to me! If our psych boys
are right, "Jon" is quite possibly
never coming back. The linchpin of
America's strategic superiority has
apparently gone to Mars.

INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- BEDROOM -- DAWN

Dan sleeps peacefully in his bed. A NEWSPAPER is dropped on
his lap. Dan wakes with a gasp. RORSCHACH looms over him.

RORSCHACH

Good morning, Daniel. I brought
you a paper.

Dan reads the headline: DR. MANHATTAN LEAVES EARTH.

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

The Comedian murdered. Dr.
Manhattan exiled. Two of us gone
within a week. Who's next? Veidt?
Ms. Jupiter? Me? -- You?

Rorschach turns for the door as Dan reads the story.

RORSCHACH (cont'd)

By the way, that new lock broke
after one shove.

DAN

My new lock --

RORSCHACH

Get a stronger one, Daniel. You
can't be too security conscious
these days.

INT. WHITE HOUSE -- WAR ROOM -- DAY

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

These days... nobody's safe.

A HUGE MAP OF THE WORLD, projected via computer onto the war-
room screens. The PRESIDENT and his ADVISORS look up at it.
We do not see faces, they are hidden in shadow. Just voices.

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR

The Chinese are fortifying troop commitments to the East and West. North Korean tanks are on the move in force. Ground fighting has erupted on the Israeli border... And Egypt is threatening to enter the hostilities.

PRESIDENT

Jesus.

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR

Yes, Mr. President. Russian forces are mobilizing to the south. India and Pakistan are simultaneously conducting show-of-strength nuclear tests.

PRESIDENT

All of this, because one man --

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR

All due respect sir, we are not talking about a man. We are talking about a the single-most significant symbol of our nation's superiority -- whose departure has prompted a world-wide opportunity to grind axes buried for a long, long time. At this rate of deterioration, I believe we'll see an exchange of nuclear firepower within the next two weeks.

Pale, the President takes this in. PUSH IN ON: THE MAP.

PRESIDENT (V.O.)

Gentlemen, I'm afraid humanity may be in the hands of a higher power than mine.

EXT. MARS -- NIGHT

PRESIDENT (V.O.)

Let's just hope he's on our side.

ANGLE ON: THE EARTH. CAMERA PULLS BACK, at millions of miles an hour to: DR. MANHATTAN, looking up at what can now only be seen as a twinkling star -- to us at least. Jon looks down.

CLOSE ON: A PHOTOGRAPH. Of young Jon. Human Jon. We hear his VOICE. Unlike Rorschach's rasping V/O, this voice is intimate, modulated, as if he is speaking in our own minds.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

The photograph is in my hand. In twelve seconds time, I drop the photograph to the sand at my feet, walking away. It's already lying there, twelve seconds into the future. Ten seconds now.

Jon looks at the photo, eyes hollow, infinitely lonely.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It's October, 2004. I'm on Mars.
It's July, 1969. I'm in New Jersey, at the Palisades Amusement Park. Four seconds now. Three.

CLOSE ON: JON'S FINGERS, opening. SLOW -- The photograph falls. Jon stands, walking away.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I am going to look at the stars.
They are so far away, and their light takes so long to reach us.
All we ever see of stars are their old photographs.

Looking up at the stars, CAMERA PANS around Jon's face, the LIGHT CHANGING as his FACE CHANGES to become HUMAN again.

EXT. GILA FLATS NUCLEAR TESTING FACILITY -- CONTINUOUS

Human Jon stares up at the gates of the Gila Flats base.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

It is May 12th, 1969. My first day at Gila Flats. A young research assistant named Wally Weaver shows me around:

INT. INTRINSIC FIELD GENERATOR ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

WALLY WEAVER, pudgy, genial, walks with Jon into a warehouse-like room containing a single lead-lined CHAMBER.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

I am thirty years old.

WALLY

They're doing intrinsic field experiments in here. Like what if there's some field holding stuff together apart from gravity.

YOUNG JON

(re: the Chamber)

What's this?

WALLY

Time-lock test vault. So no radiation gets out. It's a safety feature. Come on, I'll show you where the real action happens.

As Jon turns from the door, we PAN PAST HIS FACE which for a moment, reverts BACK TO JON ON MARS, but as he continues to look left, he FADES BACK to his young, human self to meet:

INT. THE BESTIARY (GILA FLATS BAR) -- DAY

WALLY

Janey Slater, I'd like you to meet Jonathan Osterman -- the new guy.

Their eyes lock. Instant electricity.

JANEY SLATER

Hi.

INT. THE BESTIARY -- LATER

Janey sits at the bar talking to the shy young scientist.
CLOSE ON: THEIR HANDS as she passes him a MUG OF BEER.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

She buys me a beer. The first time a woman has done this for me. As she passes me the cold, perspiring glass, our fingers touch...

QUICK FLASHES -- Various bedrooms, loving, fighting.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It's 1983, we're making love after an argument. It's 1986, she's packing, careless with anger.

ANGLE ON: THE PHOTOGRAPH in the Martian sand.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Twenty minutes ago, the photograph
lies at my feet.

PUSH IN ON: THE PHOTO -- and from there: INTO IT.

EXT. PALISADES PARK NEW JERSEY -- DAY

FLASH, a photographer SNAPS THE PHOTO. The young lovers
laugh and wander through the park.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
She takes me to an amusement park.
By the shooting gallery, Janey's
watchband snaps. Before I can get
to it, a fat man steps on it. My
father was a watchmaker. I tell
her I can fix it.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON: THE CRACKED FACE of the WATCH. PULL OUT TO REVEAL:
JON and JANEY, lying in bed together. Deeply in love.

INT. GILA FLATS -- CAFETERIA -- DAY

Janey and Young Jon hold hands in the cafeteria.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
August, 1969. She asks if I have
fixed her watch. I've left it in
my lab coat while resetting the
Intrinsic Field Chamber. The
accident is almost upon me now.

INT. INTRINSIC FIELD GENERATOR ROOM -- DAY

Jon enters the I.F. ROOM, spots his COAT hanging on a
CINDERBLOCK INSIDE THE CHAMBER. Entering, the door SWINGS
SHUT behind him. A MONITOR flickers the word: OPERATING.

DR. MANHATTAN
The others return from lunch. I
ask them to let me out, laughing at
my own stupidity.

Horrorified faces look through the glass at Young Jon.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
No-one else laughs. Dr. Glass
explains that the door has locked
automatically as the generators
warm up for today's experiment:

PAN DOWN TO: A CINDERBLOCK painted with a MILITARY #15.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...Removing the Intrinsic Field
from cinderblock number 15.

PULL OUT FROM: JON, through the glass, stunned, frightened.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The time lock on the door cannot be
opened. It's a safety feature.

PUSH IN ON: JANEY, outside the glass, horrified.

IN THE CHAMBER, SHIELDS slide back from TWO PARTICLE CANNONS.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The air grows too warm, too fast.
I want very much for a beautiful
woman to hand me a glass of very
cold beer. And suddenly the
light...

The PARTICLES in the air become CHARGED, GLOWING.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The light is taking me to pieces.

The PARTICLE CANNONS FIRE. Young Jon is UTTERLY OBLITERATED.
Janey turns away, crying.

INT. THE BESTIARY -- NIGHT

THE PHOTOGRAPH of Janey and Jon. Janey pins it to the cork-board behind the bar.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
A token funeral service is held.
There is nothing left to bury.

INT. GILA FLATS -- BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Wally Weaver washes his face in the bathroom sink. A
DISEMBODIED BRAIN, SPINAL COLUMN AND EYES, stare at him from
the mirror, GLOWING BRIGHT BLUE. He turns... But it is gone.

INT. GILA FLATS -- KITCHEN -- NIGHT

A COOK SHRIEKS at a NETWORK OF VEINS in the shape of a man.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
November 10th. A disembodied
circulatory system is walking
through the cafeteria kitchen.

EXT. GILA FLATS -- GATES -- NIGHT

A SKELETON howls at the sky before two terrified Gate Guards.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
November 14th. A partially muscled
skeleton stands by the perimeter
fence, screaming for thirty seconds
before vanishing.

ANGLE ON: WATCH-COGS, laid out on black velvet.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Really, it's just a matter of
reassembling the components in the
proper sequence.

INT. GILA FLATS -- CAFETERIA -- NIGHT

Wally eats quietly with Janey. She cries softly. Wally
reaches for her hand. STATIC SPARKS snap between them. All
over the cafeteria, the METAL UTENSILS begin to SPARK. In
the center of the room, GLOWING BLUE PARTICLES begin to
collect, SLAMMING INTO EACH OTHER with amazing force.

In a BLINDING FLASH, THE PARTICLES SLAM TOGETHER TO FORM DR.
MANHATTAN. He HOVERS OVER THE ROOM Like a newborn god.

PUSH IN ON: JANEY SLATER.

JANEY SLATER
Oh God... Jon?

INT. JON AND JANEY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
I repeat: The superman exists, and
he is American.

Jon and Janey watch the news. ON THE TV: B&W IMAGES OF DR.
MANHATTAN -- DISMANTLING A RIFLE IN MID-AIR, DESTROYING A
TANK WITH A WAVE OF HIS HAND.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)
I enter into public service,
initially as something the public
refers to as a "Crimefighter".
(MORE)

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (cont'd)
Later in a more... military
context.

ANGLE ON: NORTH VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS, crouching under a star-filled sky amidst a smoking village. Hearing something, one of them LOOKS TO THE HORIZON. Out of the darkness, a BLUE LIGHT DAWNS, followed by DR. MANHATTAN who rises into view -- ONE HUNDRED FEET TALL.

The Viet Cong run in religious terror. The BLUE ENERGY from his body comes off him in WAVES -- ROLLING BLUE FIRE WHICH FLOODS the dirt road... Engulfing and destroying them all.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
In Vietnam, I meet the Comedian,
whose real name is Edward Blake.

Jon shakes hands with Eddie in the Saigon bar we saw them in earlier. Liao Lin hangs off his arm, kissing his neck.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Blake suits the climate here. The
madness, the pointless butchery.
He understands it... and finds it
comical.

ANGLE ON: EDDIE -- Using a FLAMETHROWER on a V.C. encampment, his mad, avid smile lit up by flame. He laughs wildly.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I meet others. The new Night Owl,
who retires quietly when the anti-
vigilantism bill is passed.

DAN DREIBERG pulls a TARP over his OWL-SHIP.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Rorschach, who expresses his
feelings toward compulsory
retirement in a note left outside
police headquarters, pinned to the
body of a dead multiple rapist.

PAN UP: A SIDEWALK, to find a broken, twisted BODY with a note pinned to its chest which reads: NEVER.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And Laurie, of course. Laurie...

ANGLE ON: THE CRIMEBUSTER'S MEETING, as Eddie LIGHTS THE MAP OF AMERICA, Jon, arms linked with a now-older Janey Slater, stares directly into the eyes of a SEVENTEEN YEAR OLD LAURIE. The young girl smiles back, sly.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ozymandias is the only other so-called "hero" with whom I share any kind of rapport. His real name is Adrian Veidt, a self-made billionaire. After his public retirement, he invites Laurie and I to his retreat in Antarctica.

CLOSE ON: A HUGE JUNGLE CAT, like no other we have ever seen.

LAURIE (O.S.)
What is it? It's so beautiful.

CUT WIDE: Jon, Laurie and Adrian stand in the MAMMOTH FOYER of Adrian's monolithic home. Laurie pets the monstrous cat.

ADRIAN
That's Bubastis. She's a genetically altered Lynx.

LAURIE
I hadn't realized bioengineering had advanced so far.

ADRIAN
It's leapt forward in the past twenty years. Everything has, from quantum physics to transport to...

Adrian flicks a small BLUED-SURFACE LENS on his desk. It CATCHES a BEAM OF SUNLIGHT from a strategically-placed skylight, producing an INTENSE LASER, which lights his cigar.

ADRIAN (cont'd)
Solar power. -- And we owe it all to Jon. With your help, our scientists are limited only by their imaginations.

DR. MANHATTAN
And by their consciences, surely?

Adrian walks to a thirty-foot window, watching the blowing snow. He puffs the cigar, thoughtful, knowing.

ADRIAN
Let's hope so.

EXT. MARS -- NIGHT

JON, sits in the red sand before a vast, empty vista. CROSS-
LEGGED, He RISES INTO THE AIR. The red sand begins to FUSE
TOGETHER IN A COMPLEX PATTERN, RISING FROM THE SAND.

DR. MANHATTAN

Without me, the world would have
been different. If the fat man
hadn't crushed the watch, if I
hadn't left it in the test
chamber...

The intricate streams of glass FUSE, creating a huge, CLOCK-
WORK STRUCTURE of glass balconies and varying levels.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Am I to blame, then? Or the fat
man? Or my father for choosing my
career. *

The rising glass castle now DWARFS the blue figure before it.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Who makes the world?

INT. GUNGA DINER -- NIGHT

Woefully human, Dan bites a hunk of chicken from a bone. He
sits across a diner booth from Laurie.

LAURIE

Now that Jon's gone, they tell me I
can't live at the base anymore.

DAN

Well, uh... you know, there's
always my place...

INT. RORSCHACH'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

ANGLE: THROUGH THE WINDOW, where a gang of boys are gathered.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Rorschach's journal, October 21st.
Awoken today by boys with spray
cans, defacing the building across
the street.

A SPRAY-PAINTED IMAGE. A HIROSHIMA SILHOUETTE of two lovers.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (cont'd)
Disturbed to find I had fallen
asleep without removing my face. I
should be more careful.

RORSCHACH'S POV: He removes the RORSCHACH MASK and holds it
in his hands, face hidden from us.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Without my face, nobody knows.
Nobody knows who I am.

EXT. GUNGA DINER -- DAY

RORSCHACH'S POV: Dan and Laurie exit the Gunga Diner.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)
Saw Dreiberg and Jupiter on
Fortieth and Seventh. They didn't
know me. -- An affair, perhaps?
Did Laurie Jupiter engineer Dr.
Manhattan's departure to make room
for Dreiberg? Also, she hated the
Comedian. Must investigate
further.

INT. GUNGA DINER -- DAY

OUT THE WINDOW, we can see the TRASH CAN across the street.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)
Bought a coffee in the diner and
watched my mail drop. I sat,
waiting for an answer, and the city
opened its heart to me.

Rorschach's HANDS use a KETCHUP CYLINDER to draw a QUESTION
MARK in the menu. Rorschach FOLDS THE MENU, opens it. The
question mark is now a smeared, symmetrical RORSCHACH BLOT.

INT. VEIDT ENTERPRISES -- FOYER -- DAY

PERSONAL ASSISTANT (V.O.)
Time's running out, Mr. Veidt.
You'd better hurry.

Adrian walks into the foyer beside his pretty ASSISTANT. The
foyer is decorated in the same Egyptian style as the offices.

ADRIAN
I'm meeting the toy people, yes?

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

Eleven-thirty. They want to talk to you about some new villains for the "Ozymandias" line.

ADRIAN

The major villains are all dead.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

What is it with everybody today? Everyone's on this total death trip because of the war.

ADRIAN

Maybe they don't have your youth and optimism.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

It's the decor around here. All this Egyptian stuff. It's so obsessed with death. It's morbid.

ADRIAN

Death wasn't morbid to the Egyptians. It was a voyage of spiritual discovery. Don't you find that a comforting thought?

A MAN in a TRENCHCOAT approaches the pair. He DRAWS A GUN.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

Please. Losing ten pounds, that's a comforting... Is that a gun?

BANG -- The man SHOOTS THE ASSISTANT in the gut. Adrian moves with unbelievable speed, grabbing a velvet ROPE-STANCHION, DEFLECTING A SECOND BULLET with it, and SMASHES IT INTO THE FACE OF THE ASSASSIN, knocking him into a fountain.

SECURITY GUARDS, GUNS DRAWN, run toward the fountain where Adrian grapples with the dazed man.

SECURITY GUARD

Mr. Veidt! Let us handle it!

ADRIAN

Back off! He's got a poison capsule!

He jams his fingers into the assassin's mouth.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

Don't bite down, you scum! I want
to know who sent you!

ANGLE ON: THE ASSASSIN, eyes wide with fear.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

I want to know who's behind this.

The man CHOKES... and dies. Adrian DROPS him into the water.

EXT. FORTIETH STREET -- NIGHT

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Rorschach's Journal, October 21st.
Someone tried to kill Adrian Veidt
today, proving my mask-killer
theory. The murderer is closing
in. Checking my mail drop, I
receive a message from Moloch.

RORSCHACH'S POV: His gloved hands pull a WHITE ENVELOPE
marked "R" out of the trash can. The envelope contains a
NOTE which reads: "R - Come by tonight at 11:30. Have
information. URGENT. - Jacobi"

RORSCHACH (CONT'D)

At last. Someone has an answer for
me.

INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- GUEST ROOM -- NIGHT

Dan shows Laurie his guest room.

DAN

If you wake up and, y'know, need
anything, I'll be down the hall.
Aspirin, coffee, stuff like that.

*
*
*

LAURIE

It's perfect. Thanks again.
(kisses his cheek)
Sweet dreams.

INT. DAN DREIBERG'S HOUSE -- DAN'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Dan lies down. RAIN begins to spatter the windows. He sighs.

*

DAN

Hell.

*

INT. DAN'S SPARE BEDROOM -- NIGHT

PUSH IN ON: LAURIE, sleeping fitfully.

INT. LAURIE'S DREAM -- DAHLIA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

SIX-YEAR-OLD LAURIE creeps down the stairs in the middle of the night. Her parents are fighting in the next room.

DAHLIA (O.S.)

When I shouted at him, he was shocked. He couldn't imagine why I'd bear a grudge, and I just couldn't sustain the anger.

LARRY SCHEXNEYDER (O.S.)

You need analysis, you know that?

DAHLIA (O.S.)

You wanted to hear it, so I'm telling you!

Little Laurie enters a darkened DEN. Her mother's COSTUME hangs on a headless mannequin. She feels its hem.

Dahlia (O.S.) (cont'd)

And he was gentle. You know what gentleness means in a guy like that? It means you reached something! Some of that magic and romance they promise you when you're a kid.

Laurie picks up a SNOW-GLOBE and stares at it, fascinated.

LARRY SCHEXNEYDER (O.S.)

What it means is a broken marriage!
An uncertain future for our child!

DAHLIA (O.S.)

MY child! That's what this is about, remember?

The globe SLIPS from Laurie's hands, SMASHING to the floor.

LARRY SCHEXNEYDER

Laurel Jane?

Her MOTHER and STEP-FATHER look down at the little girl. Tears run down her cheeks as she looks up at them.

SIX YR. OLD LAURIE

I'm sorry, daddy.

Lightning CRASHES. The SOUND TRANSITIONS TO:

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT -- OFFICE -- NIGHT

Detectives FINE looks out the window as fat DROPS OF RAIN begin to fall. BOURQUIN sifts through various files.

FINE

Y'know, all today, I've had this feeling. Something in the air...

BOURQUIN

That's sound waves. Phone's ringing.

FINE

(picking up)

Detective Fine speaking. What's your name? Oh, an anonymous tip, sure, okay. What've you got? -- Raw what? No, you're breaking up. Shark? Why would I want to know where to find... Raw shark.

THUNDER CRASHES. SLOW: PAPERS SLIP FROM BOURQUIN'S HANDS.

INT. MOLOCH'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON: MOLOCH'S EYES, staring with fear out the rainy window. Rorschach appears in the darkness behind him.

RORSCHACH

Hello Jacobi. Somebody tried to shoot the world's smartest man today.

Rorschach slips into the room, dangerous. Moloch sits at the kitchen table, hand to his forehead. CLOSE ON: MOLOCH'S HAND, where an ignored CIGARETTE smolders.

RORSCHACH (cont'd)

Somebody's killing masks, Jacobi. Somebody wants us all --

Rorschach turns on the old man. A BULLET HOLE gapes between Jacobi's horrified eyes. A PISTOL lies at Jacobi's feet. SUDDEN, BLINDING LIGHT GLARES THROUGH THE WINDOW.

FINE (O.S.)

(over loudspeakers)

RORSCHACH, THIS IS THE POLICE!

RORSCHACH

No.

FINE (O.S.)
WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE.

RORSCHACH

No. No, no, no.

FINE (O.S.)
IF THERE'S ANYONE ELSE IN THERE
WITH YOU, SEND THEM OUT UNHARMED.

Jacobi's body stares at Rorschach. Rorschach TEARS OPEN the cupboards, yanking items off the shelves.

RORSCHACH

Framed. Set up. Walked right into it. Stupid, stupid, stupid.

FINE (O.S.)
LET'S MAKE THIS A NICE, CLEAN
SURRENDER.

RORSCHACH

Hehn... Never. Never surrender.

Rorschach takes an AEROSOL CAN and a PEPPER SHAKER.

FINE (O.S.)
ALRIGHT. I HOPE YOU'RE READY, HERO.

Rorschach's mask DISAPPEARS back into darkness.

RORSCHACH

When you are...

INT. MOLOCH'S BROWNSTONE -- FOYER -- CONTINUOUS

CRASH -- Moloch's door is SMASHED OPEN. Armed SWAT cops swarm in, though no more than three can fit in the narrow entryway. THE FRONT DOOR LOCK is twisted and smashed.

SWAT COP 1
I'm telling you it's a bum tip.

SWAT COP 2
Keep your eyes open. Here there..

He says the rest too quietly to be heard.

SWAT COP 1
What?

*
*
*
*

SWAT COP 2
I said "here there be tygers."

Swat Cop 1 turns around, a dark DOORWAY behind him.

SWAT COP 1
What the hell does that mean?

From behind him, Rorschach APPEARS out of the darkness. He IGNITES the AEROSOL CAN'S STREAM, SPRAYING THE COPS WITH FIRE. They fall back, screaming, firing. Rorschach BOLTS upstairs, IGNITING the staircase behind him. Pandemonium.

SWAT COP 3
Where'd he go?

SWAT COP 2
Upstairs! He's upstairs! Go!

INT. MOLOCH'S BROWNSTONE -- SECOND FLOOR -- CONTINUOUS

SWAT COPS clear the 2nd floor landing, already lit by fire. They move in formation down a flickering hallway.

SWAT COP 3
Where is he? All this smoke --

SWAT COP 1
This guy is an animal. You know he broke a guy's index finger in six places? How do you even --

SWAT COP 2
Relax! The file says he never goes armed. He just --

Rorschach APPEARS, flinging PEPPER INTO COP 2'S EYES.

SWAT COP 2 (cont'd)
AHH! I CAN'T SEE!

SWAT COP 1
Get out of the way! I don't have room to --

Swat cop 1 clears his line of fire... to find Rorschach AIMING THE GRAPPLING GUN AT HIM.

SWAT COP 1 (cont'd)
Shoot.

The grapple BLOWS THE BODY-ARMORED COP OVER THE RAILING.

EXT. MOL. A'S BROWNSTONE -- NIGHT

Bourquin and Fine watch from behind a LINE OF COP CARS. The house is now BLAZING. Smoke and men's screams drift out.

FINE

We've got him. There's no way out.

ANGLE UP ON: THE TOWNHOUSE, as Rorschach, snarling like a rabid dog, SMASHES THROUGH THE WINDOW, landing hard two stories below. He tries to run, but his ankle TWISTS, dropping him to the ground. The cops pile on him. Rorschach fights like mad. He cripples two uniform cops.

RORSCHACH

No pain. Get up. Been framed.
Who? Who did this?

A cop KICKS HIM in the throat. Rorschach drops again. They wrestle him to the ground.

FINE

Get that mask off him!

BOURQUIN

I got it. Boy, he stinks!

RORSCHACH

No no no NO NO!

Bourquin peels back the shifting mask to reveal the sign-carrying HOMELESS MAN. He screams at them wildly.

RORSCHACH (cont'd)

My face! Give it back to me!

WIDE ANGLE: The beaten Rorschach, surrounded by cops, as Moloch's house blazes merrily in the background.

RORSCHACH (cont'd)

GIVE ME BACK MY FACE!

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- DAY

CLOSE ON: THE NIGHT-OWL UNIFORM, staring its blank, empty stare. Not at Dan this time, but LAURIE. Fascinated with the costume, the gadgets, the whole place, she wanders to the OWL-SHIP, whose tarp has been partially pulled back. She runs her finger through the DUST caked on one eye-like windshield.

INT. OWL-SHIP -- DAY

Laurie pulls open a HATCH filled with ALTERNATE COSTUMES; designed for underwater work, cold conditions, heavy armor. She puts a GLASS-BULB cigarette in her mouth.

LAURIE

Where's the damn dash lighter?

She notes A BUTTON with a FLAME etched into it. Pressing it, the ship's FLAMETHROWERS FLOOD THE CHAMBER WITH FIRE.

INT. DAN'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Dan pours SUGAR CUBES into a jar. Downstairs, he hears LAURIE SCREAM. RORSCHACH FLASHES THROUGH DAN'S MIND.

RORSCHACH

Who's next? Adrian? Ms. Jupiter?
Me? -- You? *

Dan bolts for the basement door.

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- DAY

Moving with effortless grace, Dan grabs a FIRE EXTINGUISHER.

DAN

LAURIE!

Dan sprays the fire. Laurie tumbles from the smoke.

LAURIE

I'm so sorry. I was looking for the dash lighter.

DAN

I don't smoke. Are you hurt?

LAURIE

I'm fine, but your beautiful ship --

DAN

Ah, that's mostly just soot. Archie's pretty resilient.

LAURIE

Archie?

DAN

(blushing)

Short for Archimedes. He was.. Merlin's owl.

(MORE)

DAN (cont'd)

I'm just glad you're okay. I heard you scream and well, you know -- after the Comedian...

LAURIE

Don't tell me you're buying into Rorschach's mask-killer theory.

DAN

No. I don't know.

LAURIE

Dan. Rorschach is psychotic. Everything's a conspiracy to him.

DAN

It's just... the Comedian murdered, Jon exiled. Someone tries to shoot Adrian, Rorschach gets taken by the police. It makes me uneasy.

Dan goes to a BANK OF SWITCHES on the wall. Flicking them, the Owl-Chamber LIGHTS UP. Hidden FANS dissipate the smoke.

LAURIE

There's so much wonderful stuff down here. Like a magician's lair.

DAN

With all these leaks and puddles? No... Maybe it used to seem like that once, but these days it's sort of an embarrassment. A schoolkid's fantasy that got out of hand.

She picks up a GLOVE, feels its padded weight.

LAURIE

Powdered lead in the gloves right? My mother swore by it. "Builds your arms," she'd say. "Quadruples the force of the punch, plus you get so used to winning by surprise, it builds confidence." -- This looks cool.

She picks up a RAZOR-EDGED BOOMERANG. The wings resemble an owl's, a sculpted owl-face screams from it's center.

DAN

Sure, very cool. It's a computer-designed perfection of the boomerang. Problem was, the first time I threw it at someone...

He pulls up his pant-leg, revealing a nasty, JAGGED SCAR. Unsuccessfully stifling a giggle, Laurie examines a case of memorabilia. She picks up a FRAMED PHOTO of a WOMAN dressed in BLACK LEATHER, with a MASK and WHIP, signed "From one night bird to another. -- The Twilight Lady"

LAURIE

Who's this?

DAN

Oh, nobody really. This vice-queen I put away in the eighties. Called herself "Dusk Woman", or something.

LAURIE

"The Twilight Lady." She sent you this?

DAN

She had some sort of fixation on me. She was a very disturbed woman. I keep meaning to throw it away but... you know how it is.

LAURIE

It must be great having a secret place nobody knows about. Nobody watching you.

DAN

Isn't there? These days I feel like something's watching my every move.

SIDE ANGLE ON: THE OWL-COSTUME, HUGE in the frame. Waiting.

INT. PRISON CELL -- NIGHT

ANGLE ON: The back of a head, staring into a mirror.

REVERSE ANGLE: Two PRISON GUARDS stand at the BARS of the CELL. One Guard reads off a CLIPBOARD.

PRISON GUARD

Walter Kovacs. -- Kovacs, let's go!

PRISON GUARD 2

... Rorschach.

RORSCHACH TURNS, clean-shaven, cold and frightening.

INT. PRISON HALLS -- NIGHT

Rorschach is lead by the two big guards. From the cells, PRISONERS jeer and chant. Insults, death threats. Rorschach stares ahead. Calm. Silent.

INT. PRISON PSYCH ROOM -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A RORSCHACH BLOT CARD. DR. MALCOLM LONG, the prison Psychiatrist -- black, amiable, a mite portly -- sits across the table from Rorschach.

LONG

I guess I don't need to tell you
what this is.

Long smiles at his joke. Rorschach does not.

LONG (cont'd)

Come on Walter. Will you at least
look at it, tell me what you see?

QUICK FLASHES: Of a dead DOG. BLOOD. Horror.

RORSCHACH

A pretty butterfly.

LONG

Good. That's very good. How about
this one? What do you see here?

In the second card, Rorschach SEES: HIMSELF, as little boy. His MOTHER looming over him, huge. She SMACKS him hard in the face. He sees CHILDREN, TAUNTING HIM. One of them calls his mother a WHORE. Young Walter ATTACKS the much larger child, shoving the kid's own CIGARETTE into his eye.

RORSCHACH

Some nice flowers.

LONG

Excellent. Just excellent Walter.

(rising)

I think there may be hope yet,
don't you?

Rorschach stares at Long. Icy silence.

LONG (cont'd)

Anyway. I'll see you tomorrow.
Maybe you'll tell me a bit about
Rorschach. What do you say?

*

Nothing. Long nods. Backs out the door.

INT. PRISON MESS HALL -- NIGHT

The Mess hall is PACKED for dinner. Hundreds of INMATES talk and eat, creating the buzz of a room packed full of humanity.

ANGLE ON: THE ENTRANCE, as RORSCHACH is led in by a two-man guard detail. The place goes instantly, heavily SILENT. A WHISPER drifts, unidentifiable across the room.

WHISPER

You're dead... hero.

A cruel RIPPLE OF LAUGHTER -- and the mass conversation begins again as Rorschach takes his place in the food line. A HUGE BLACK PRISONER moves in behind him. He whispers to Rorschach, unheard by the guards.

PRISONER

Hey. Rorschach. You're pretty famous, right?

ANGLE ON: THE MAN'S HAND, removing a SHIV from his grays.

PRISONER (cont'd)

You know... I wouldn't mind a little fame myself.

Rorschach doesn't register that he's heard this. He simply waits for the FRY-COOK behind the counter to turn away -- Then casually reaches across the counter and lifts the DEEP-FRYER BASKET from its mount.

The big Prisoner JABS the shiv forward -- as Rorschach spins, GRIPPING the man's wrist and FLINGING the BOILING GREASE into the man's face. The man SHRIEKS like a FIRE WHISTLE and CRASHES TO THE GROUND. The Guards DESCEND on Rorschach. As the man's screams fall away to weak, bubbling gasps, the room goes even more silent than before.

PAN WITH: RORSCHACH as he is DRAGGED by the shoulders, BACKWARDS FROM THE HALL. He eyes the fearful, hateful eyes of the room, marking each one. And in the silence he speaks, icy voice carrying easily.

RORSCHACH

None of you understand. -- I'm not locked up in here with you.

CLOSE ON: RORSCHACH, placidly dragged off into darkness.

RORSCHACH (cont'd)
You're locked up in here with me.

INT. DAN'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

ANGLE ON: DAN, as seen through GLOWING, INFRA-RED LENSES.

LAURIE
Dan, these are amazing!

DAN
They work pretty well as I recall.

CUT WIDE: Laurie and Dan sit in the dark living room, the only light cast by the murmuring TV. Laurie wears Dan's specially designed OWL-GOGGLES.

LAURIE'S POV: Gazing around the red-tinged, glow-edged room.

LAURIE
This must be what it's like to have powers. It must be so strange to be Jon. You know he can see Neutrinos?

DAN
I'm going to get some drinks. *

Dan gets up. Laurie removes the goggles, realizing his discomfort. She turns up the TV.

NEWSCASTER
Today, police allowed cameras into the apartment kept by the vigilante Rorschach, whose real name has been revealed as Walter Kovacs.

On the TV, IMAGES of a filthy apartment.

NEWSCASTER (cont'd)
Kovacs' landlady, Delores Shairp, described Kovacs as a "Nazi psychopath", pointing out stacks of right-wing literature, including back issues of the ultra-conservative publication, the "New Frontiersman". We asked "New Frontiersman" editor, Hector Godfrey for comment.

HECTOR GODFREY

Isn't it time we re-assessed
Rorschach as a patriot and
American?

Dan brings in a TRAY. A bottle of DOM PERIGNON, two glasses. *

LAURIE *

Oh Dan. I am a sucker for good
Champagne. *

DAN *

(re: the TV)

He used to be something, Rorschach.
Tactically brilliant. But that
mask's eaten his brains away.
Still, something about this Jacobi
murder charge -- I just don't see
him shooting someone. *

LAURIE *

He shot a cop with a grappling gun. *

DAN *

Don't remind me, I made that thing
for him. But a regular gun seems
too... ordinary. *

NEWSCASTER

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, fighting
continues...

LAURIE

(changing the channel)

This war, god. Sometimes I wish I
could just split. Like Jon.

DAN

Sure. The old Manhattan Transfer.

LAURIE

That's what you call Jon's
teleportation?

DAN

Well... not to his face.

LAURIE

Oh look, it's Adrian!

On the TV, Adrian, dressed in his full OZYMANDIAS COSTUME,
stands on a platform above an intricate series of bars.

Dan watches, cleaning his glasses with his shirt-tail as Adrian LEAPS from bar to bar. Dan wipes his glasses with his shirt.

DAN

Boy, he's incredible.

Laurie looks at Dan without his glasses for the first time. She brushes his hair back from his forehead.

LAURIE

Why Mr. Dreiberg, you're ravishing.

DAN

Uh, Laurie, that's... I don't know.
It's been a long time since --

She moves close to him, just this side of tipsy. *

LAURIE

You know what your problem is?
You're inhibited. *

PUSH IN ON: The TV. Adrian flips, swings, spins, grabs.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Notice not one tremor of effort --
just one seamless flow of motion.

DAN (O.S.)

Um, Can you move a little to your
left? I can't --

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

His natural grace is extraordinary.
This a man in his forties!

LAURIE (O.S.)

Is that better?

DAN (O.S.)

Yeah. It's, no... I just can't
seem to -- Ah, hell.

PUSH IN ON: DAN and Laurie, rumped. Dan sits on the edge of the couch, puts his face in his hands.

DAN (cont'd)

I'm sorry.

LAURIE

Don't be.

Laurie pulls him back down onto the couch, snuggling comfortably behind him. She closes her eyes, content.

LAURIE (cont'd)

I know how it is when something's not right. Good night Dan.

INT. DAN'S NIGHTMARE -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON: DAN, on his knees in the center of an INFINITE FIELD OF BLACKNESS. No corners, no exits. In the DISTANCE, he sees a FEMALE FORM. Desperate, he runs to her.

PUSH IN ON: THE TWILIGHT LADY, waiting in her leather gear. They kiss. She tears at his clothes. They rip and fall away. Then, his SKIN does the same, tearing away like Christmas wrapping. Beneath the skin, Dan wears his NIGHT-OWL COSTUME. Confident, he caresses the woman's face.

Suddenly, HE TEARS HER SKIN AWAY as well, revealing LAURIE beneath, also in costume. She smiles with palpable heat.

They kiss. In the B/G, a NUCLEAR BLAST EXPLODES. Still kissing, the HEAT and WIND and LIGHT REDUCE THEM TO TWO EMBRACING SKELETONS.

INT. DAN'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Dan WAKES, sweat beaded on his forehead. Laurie sleeps on.

INT. PRISON CELL -- NIGHT

Rorschach sits in his cell, staring impassively at the wall.

BIG FIGURE (O.S.)

It's been a long time, Rorschach.

UP ANGLE: On the PRISON BARS. Two HUGE PRISONERS stand side by side, one muscle bound, the other very fat. PAN DOWN: To reveal a DWARF between them. His silver hair combed neatly back, a big CIGAR perched in his mouth.

RORSCHACH

Big Figure. -- Small world.

BIG FIGURE

(chuckles through smoke)

I like that. But you know, it is a small world in here. I've been in it for -- how long now, Larry?

FAT MAN

Twenty years, Mr. Figure.

BIG FIGURE

That's right. Twenty years since
you and that Owl fella put me away.

(steps closer)

That guy you burned is dying.
Couple of days, tops. When he
does, this place is gonna explode.
And then... you die by inches.

RORSCHACH

Tall order.

MUSCLE BOUND THUG

(SLAMS into the bars)

I'm gonna tear this guy a new hole!

BIG FIGURE

Relax, Lloyd... Soon.

Chuckling, Big Figure walks off down the long, shadowed
corridor. Rorschach continues staring, straight ahead.

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- NIGHT

ANGLE UP: THE STAIRS as the DOOR opens. Laurie stands in the
shaft of light.

LAURIE

Dan?

Descending the stairs, she finds Dan sitting on the crate
before his costume, naked. He fiddles with an OWL-WING.

DAN

It's this war. Feeling like it's
unavoidable. It makes me feel so
powerless. So... impotent. -- I
came down here for my costume, or,
I don't know. I just want to take
the air. Blow the cobwebs away.

He FLINGS the metal crescent, whizzing into the dark.

LAURIE

Let's take the ship out.

DAN

What?

LAURIE

Who's to know? I used to be a
masked avenger too, remember?

(MORE)

LAURIE (cont'd)

I'm used to going out at three in
the morning to do something stupid.
Get ready. Can't go out like that.

She runs upstairs. Slow, Dan turns to the empty suit. It
stares into him. Daring him. The OWL-WING THUNKS INTO THE
WALL for punctuation.

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- NIGHT

PAN UP: DAN'S COSTUMED BODY. The Night Owl suit is
fantastic, intricate, but above the belly -- Dan's gut is too
large to close the AB-LIKE STOMACH-PLATING. He sucks in a
HUGE BREATH, just managing to CLICK it closed.

Laurie appears at the door, decked in her BLACK LEATHER
ARMOR. The WRAITH, looking every bit as good as seventeen. *

LAURIE

Dan? I'm ready.

Dan turns. Except now... He's Night Owl.

DAN

Me too. Let's go.

INT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT

Laurie holds on as the Owl-Ship's ENGINES ROAR to life. The
ship RISES INTO THE AIR and slips easily into the TUNNEL.
Laurie watches the LIGHTS of the tunnel whiz by. At the end,
two big STEEL DOORS open, allowing a passage UP.

DAN

Let's have some cloud cover.

INT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

THICK FOG POURS FROM LOWER-DECK JETS as the ship RISES into
an ABANDONED WAREHOUSE, whose steel roof ROLLS BACK.

INT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT

Laurie touches the window, the sparkling city laid out below.

LAURIE

It's so beautiful from up here.

DAN

Hang on.

Dan BANKS, wheeling the ship toward the VEIDT BUILDING.

DAN (CONT'D)

Got to clean her up a bit. I'm sure Adrian wouldn't want to impede the course of justice.

Heading STRAIGHT FOR THE BUILDING, Dan JIGS at the last moment, flying the ship THROUGH THE V-SHAPED WATERFALL in the skyscraper's center. The water WASHES CLEAN the years of dust. SIDE ANGLE: As the ship EMERGES, sparkling.

LAURIE

Look!

Below, a TENEMENT BUILDING is ENGULFED IN FLAME. Dan's jaw sets. He WHEELS the ship around and down. As they approach, they can see people SCREAMING from the windows.

LAURIE (cont'd)

God, there's children in there.

DAN

I'm putting the water cannons on the lower stories.

(clicks the LOUDSPEAKERS)

PLEASE REMAIN CALM. WE ARE SLOWING THE FIRE DOWN FROM BELOW. CALMLY MAKE YOUR WAY TO THE ROOF.

(to Laurie)

I'll extend the ramp. Can you escort the people over?

She watches him move, quick, confident. A different man.

LAURIE

I think I can handle that.

EXT. TENEMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

LOW ANGLE: The Owl-ship EXTENDS A RAMP across the smoke. Laurie moves the panicked people cross. *

ANGLE ON: DAN, standing atop the ship, LATCHING the STEERING COLUMN into its ROOF SOCKET. He stands, looking out over the city -- and takes a deep, chest-expanding breath. Who has he been kidding all these years? This is who he is. Flicking a SWITCH, BILLIE HOLIDAY'S "You're My Thrill" plays pleasantly.

INT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT

Laurie, standing amongst the people, looks up and smiles.

EXT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT

FIRE rising behind, Dan wings the ship STRAIGHT INTO CAMERA.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

The Owl-ship RISES from the street, leaving a grateful CROWD behind. In the B/G, FIRE TRUCKS are just arriving. A FIREFIGHTER looks up just in time to see the OWL-SHIP disappear into the clouds. *

INT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT

Dan skims the clouds like a man waking from a dream. *

DAN

I can't believe we did that!
They're going to lock us up like
Rorschach.

LAURIE

Dan...

She puts a hand on his shoulder. Dark lust paints her gaze.

LAURIE (cont'd)

Who cares.

He kisses her. Hard. Running her hands up his cheeks, they slide each other's masks off. Their mouths melt together. *

INT. OWL-SHIP -- LATER

The in-ship SPEAKERS play the tail end of the Beatles' ABBEY ROAD. Dan and Laurie lie amongst a heap of discarded costumes. It is dark. Laurie lights a cigarette.

DAN

Do you know this album?

LAURIE

I do.

DAN

Abbey Road. The Beatles' last record, and they knew it. So for the last line of the last track the Beatles' would ever sing, McCartney writes... Here, listen:

From the speakers, McCartney sings -- "And in the end: The love you take, is equal to the love... you make."

DAN (cont'd)

The perfect summation of human existence. Amazing.

LAURIE

It was good tonight, wasn't it?

DAN

Good doesn't begin...

LAURIE

Did the costumes... All of this... make it good?

DAN

Yeah. It feels so good to finally admit that. -- I can't go back. Not to what I was.

LAURIE

So what's next?

DAN

I've been thinking about that. And I think we have certain obligations to our fraternity... I think we should spring Rorschach.

INT. PRISON HALLS -- DAY

Rorschach is lead once more down the halls between two guards. This time, the INMATES stare at him silently from their cells. -- His time is coming.

INT. PRISON PSYCH ROOM -- DAY

CLOSE ON: The same RORSCHACH BLOT CARD.

RORSCHACH

I've seen this one before.

LONG

I know. I think you might have been... holding back before. Tell me what you really see Walter.

Rorschach examines the card. FLASHES of BLOOD, horror.

RORSCHACH

A dog, with its head split in half.

LONG

I see. What do you think... did that?

RORSCHACH

I did.

LONG

(beat)

I'd like you to tell me about Rorschach, Walter. Will you do that?

RORSCHACH

Why are you spending so much time with me, doctor?

LONG

... Because I care about you. I want to make you well.

RORSCHACH

There's other men in here with behavior more extreme than mine. Of course, they're not famous. You don't want to make me well. Just want to know what makes me sick.

(leans forward)

I'll tell you something, doctor. I'll tell you about Rorschach.

EXT. WHARFS -- THE PAST -- NIGHT

A fog-banked night. The OWL-SHIP illuminates RORSCHACH and a younger, thinner NIGHT OWL, in silhouette.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

In the mid-eighties, I worked with a man who called himself Night Owl, cleaning up the streets.

LONG (V.O.)

That's when you became Rorschach?

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Don't be stupid. I wasn't Rorschach then. I was just Kovacs, pretending to be Rorschach.

EXT. MONTAGE -- NIGHT

QUICK FLASHES of various CRIME SCENES. CRIMINALS, bound and gagged next to little cards bearing the RORSCHACH SYMBOL.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

I was young then. Too soft on criminals. I let them live.

EXT. CITY STREETS-- NIGHT

CAMERA DESCENDS FAST, coming to rest on RORSCHACH, slipping through the intermittent streetlights. CLOSE ON: RORSCHACH'S GLOVE, holding a PHOTO of an angelic six year old GIRL.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

In 1995 I investigated a kidnap case. Perhaps you remember. Blair Roche. Six years old. The kidnappers thought she was the heir to the Roche chemical fortune. Stupid mistake. Her father was a bus driver. No money at all. I thought of that girl, alone, frightened, waiting for someone to help. I decided to intervene.

*
*
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*

INT. HAPPY HARRY'S BAR -- NIGHT

The seediest, smokiest bar in history. The DOOR opens, revealing Rorschach. Frightened eyes turn.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

I visited underworld bars and began hurting people. I put fourteen in the hospital needlessly. The fifteenth gave me an address. An old dressmaker's warehouse.

*
*

ANGLE ON: A MAN in an ALLEY, handing Rorschach a slip of PAPER with TWISTED FINGERS, bent at odd angles.

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

A creepy, deserted-looking building. Rorschach peers through a slatted fence at two fighting DOGS.

*

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

I arrived at dusk. No lights were on. In the back, two German Sheppards were fighting over a knob of bone. Didn't seem interested in me. So I decided to go in the front, like a respectable visitor.

*
*
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*
*
*

INT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

CRACK -- The front door is KICKED OPEN, smashing the lock.

*

Rorschach moves between a line of headless MANNEQUINS. In one corner rests an old WOOD-BURNING STOVE. Rorschach removes a TORN, BLACKENED scrap of UNDERWEAR from the stove. Little hearts and capering bears adorn the material.

INT. WAREHOUSE KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Rorschach enters the kitchen. His powerful HEARTBEAT can be heard. Through the window, the FIGHTING DOGS can also be heard. Rorschach opens a CUPBOARD TO REVEAL A LINE OF KNIVES, CLEAVERS and a HACKSAW hanging from hooks. The HEARTBEAT speeds up. Outside, the snarling dogs get LOUDER.

Slowly now, Rorschach's gaze moves from the knives -- to the counter. He runs his gloved finger along RED, DEEP-CUT GROOVES in a THICK WOODEN CHOPPING BLOCK. His HEARTBEAT RACES now. His gaze continues out the window.

PUSH IN ON: The DOGS, still fighting over the bone, which from this angle, we now recognize as a small, human FEMUR.

The pounding HEARTBEAT LURCHES TO A STOP. Silence... Then, it begins again, SLOW now, calm. The heartbeat of a different man. *

PUSH IN ON: RORSCHACH, as he reaches for a large CLEAVER.

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- BACK YARD -- NIGHT

The dogs continue to fight. Neither one hears RORSCHACH RISE UP BEHIND THEM. One dog turns, snarling viciously. Rorschach RAISES THE CLEAVER high into the air. *

INT. PRISON PSYCH ROOM -- NIGHT

Dr. Long listens, entranced by the sheer horror of it all.

RORSCHACH

A tremor of impact shook my arm.
Warm blood splashed my chest. It
was Walter Kovacs who cried out,
Kovacs who closed his eyes. It was
Rorschach who opened them again.

EXT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT/DAY

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

It was dark when the building's
owner got back. Dark as it gets.

GRICE, greasy and slick, walks past the now-silent fence.

GRICE

Boys? Who's got a bark for daddy?

INT. WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

He flicks a LIGHT SWITCH -- Nothing. Grice draws a GUN.

INT. WAREHOUSE KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Grice tries the light in here. Nothing again. He tries to peer through the window, but all he can see is his own reflection. He turns away as the body of a GERMAN SHEPPARD CRASHES THROUGH THE WINDOW INTO HIS BACK, knocking him down. *

Grice RUNS through the warehouse, falling over HEADLESS MANNEQUINS. He FIRES madly into the dark. The SECOND DOG SMASHES INTO HIM FROM ANOTHER WINDOW. The gun goes flying. Terrified, Grice scrambles backward against the STOVE.

GRICE

Who's out there? I haven't done anything! I swear!

FROM BEHIND, Rorschach CUFFS THE MAN'S WRIST TO THE STOVE.

GRICE (cont'd)

You think I had something to do with that little girl. Well, I didn't. Where's your evidence, huh? WHERE'S YOUR EVIDENCE? *

Calm, deliberate, Rorschach's finger points to the dog. Rorschach places the HACKSAW on the floor.

GRICE (cont'd)

What -- Are you giving that to me? Will you please just say something?

Rorschach splashes gasoline around the room.

GRICE (cont'd)

Okay I confess! I kidnapped her! I killed her! Take me in!

RORSCHACH

(tossing the can away)
Don't try to cut through the handcuffs. You'll never make it in time.

GRICE

What? What am I supposed to cut...

Rorschach KICKS the hacksaw, SLIDING IT ACROSS THE FLOOR. It wedges itself beneath Grice's handcuffed ARM.

GRICE (cont'd)

No. Oh no...

Rorschach LIGHTS A MATCH. He TOSSES IT into the room. On the BLOOM OF FIRE, we CUT TO:

INT. PRISON PSYCH ROOM -- NIGHT

The silence reels out. Long is paralyzed. *

RORSCHACH

You know what lesson you might want
to take from all that, doctor? *

Long shakes his head. A GUARD steps in, startling him badly. *

GUARD

Time's up, Rorschach. *

Rorschach nods, pushes the BLOT-CARD back to Long and exits. Long finds that at some point, Rorschach has borrowed his pen to scrawl a spiky MESSAGE on the back of the card: *

Let sleeping dogs lie *

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- NIGHT

ANGLE ON: A COMPUTER-SCREEN MAP OF THE CITY. Soft MUSIC plays on a small RADIO. Dan sits, computing.

LAURIE

We're young lovers, the world could
end tomorrow and we're spending our
Saturday night planning to spring a
homicidal psychopath from prison.

DAN

Four heroes attacked within eleven
days is not a coincidence.
Something is going on. I thought
about calling Adrian, but if we do
it before the jailbreak, he might
feel obligated to stop us.

LAURIE

I feel obligated to stop us.

INFORMATION STREAMS across the computer screen.

DAN

I've been cross-checking Jon's cancer list. The computer says each victim at one time worked for various subsidiaries of a company called Pyramid Developments. Janey Slater. Wally Weaver. They even gave Moloch a job when he got out of prison.

LAURIE

Weird.

DAN

If someone invented the cancer scare to drive Jon away -- then someone may be planning to orchestrate World War three.

LAURIE

You're not serious.

DAN

You lived with Jon. You didn't contract cancer from him. Maybe nobody did.

LAURIE

Even so, we're in enough trouble after the tenement fire. Why risk springing Rorschach?

DAN

Rorschach's the only one who's been investigating this. Without his information, we'd have to start at the beginning, and I don't think anyone's got that kind of time left. -- Turn up the radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

-- with prison officials confirming that the prisoner scalded by the vigilante Rorschach died earlier this afternoon. Fearing a riot, one prison spokesman said they're "staring into the jaws of Hell."

Dan meets Laurie's eyes. Time's up.

INT. PRISON CELL -- NIGHT

Rorschach sits, idly TEARING his PRISON SHIRT into strips. Down the dark hall, a ROAR is building as fire FLICKERS. ALARMS ring. BIG FIGURE and his THUGS appear at the door.

BIG FIGURE

Hello Rorschach. We brought you something from the machine shop.

The FAT THUG wheels an ELECTRICAL WELDER to the door.

LARRY

Hey boss, y'notice? None of that 'small world, tall order' crap. 'Cause he knows once we slice open this lock, he's next.

RORSCHACH

Fat chance.

Larry reddens. He DIVES forward, hands swiping for Rorschach.

LARRY

You're dead! We got a jail full of killers out here! What do you got?

Rorschach SPINS, WRAPPING A SHIRT-STRIP AROUND HIS WRISTS.

RORSCHACH

Your hands. My psychosis.

Rorschach grips Larry's PINKIES and SNAPS them. Both.

INT. DAN'S OWL-CHAMBER -- NIGHT

Dan races the Owl-ship down the tunnel. He activates the FOG-SCREENS and the tunnel FILLS WITH SMOKE behind them.

INT. PRISON CELL -- NIGHT

Rorschach knots the shirt-strip roughly, binding Larry's broken fingers to each other around the bars.

LARRY

He broke my god damned fingers...

The other thug tries to put the welder to the lock.

LLOYD

I can't reach the lock. Should I cut the bars?

BIG FIGURE

This riot won't last.

Big Figure nods to Lloyd, who grabs Larry's neck.

LLOYD

Sorry about this Lar'.

LARRY

Boss, you can't be serious! Lloyd --

LLOYD

Nothing personal, man.

Lloyd SNAPS Larry's neck. Lloyd pushes the bulk out of the way to reach the lock with the welder.

BIG FIGURE

Now you find out what the score is.

RORSCHACH

One-nothing. Come and get me.

EXT. PRISON -- NIGHT

The Owl-ship descends toward a hell of tear-gas, fire and violence. The wall-guards begin to FIRE on the ship.

LAURIE

Prisoners below. We're in the occupied section.

*
*
*

DAN

Put your ear-plugs in. I'm hitting them with the screechers.

*

EXT. PRISON YARD -- NIGHT

The ship emits a PIERCING SHRIEK. WINDOWS SHATTER. The warring prisoners fall to the ground, nervous-systems fried.

*

As Laurie descends the ship's LADDER, Dan simply, joyously LEAPS OUT, his wings SNAP WIDE to GLIDE him through the air, creating an OWL SILHOUETTE against the pregnant moon.

*
*
*

INT. PRISON CELL -- NIGHT

Lloyd welds, the lock GLOWS RED. Nearly through.

BIG FIGURE

It's Hallowe'en, Rorschach. Time to face the old ghosts.

The lock **MELTS AWAY**. Rorschach climbs onto his bunk as Lloyd enters, jabbing the electric welder at him menacingly.

LLOYD

Now we get to smell you cooking.

Rorschach drives his **HEEL** into the porcelain **TOILET BOWL**, **SHATTERING IT**. **WATER SPILLS ACROSS THE FLOOR**. **CLOSE ON: LLOYD'S HAND**, suddenly **GALVANIZED TO THE WELDER** as the prison's **ENTIRE POWER SYSTEM SURGES THROUGH HIM**. The **LIGHTS FLICKER OUT**. Lloyd collapses, smoking and dead.

RORSCHACH

Hm... Never disposed of sewage with a toilet before. Obvious, really.
Two-nothing... Your move.

Big Figure looks very small and alone in the **RED EMERGENCY LIGHTS**. He runs. Rorschach calmly follows him out.

INT. PRISON HALLS -- NIGHT

The halls **FLICKER red**. **FIRES** burn in the cells. Gunshots.

DAN

He'll be in solitary.

LAURIE

I didn't know it would be like this. This horror, death --

DAN

It's Rorschach. He draws this world to him.

LAURIE

How do we even know he's alive?

A **SMOKING CORPSE** lies in a pool of water in an open cell. A dead fat man is tied by his broken fingers.

DAN

He's alive.

INT. PRISON HALLS -- NIGHT

Big Figure runs, turns a corner, ducking into the **MEN'S ROOM**. Rorschach follows, sees the bathroom door **SWING CLOSED**.

Dan and Laurie appear at the far end of the hall.

LAURIE

That looks like his posture --

DAN

Hey, Rorschach!

RORSCHACH

(entering the bathroom)

Hello Daniel, Ms. Jupiter. Excuse me, I have to visit the men's room.

LAURIE

Oh for Christ's sake...

DAN

It happens. I remember I lost a big arrest like that once.

LAURIE

I think I heard him flush.

Rorschach exits the men's room. *

RORSCHACH

We can go now.

LAURIE

Really, you sure? Let's not go diving head first into things. *

RORSCHACH

Hm. Good advice. I'm sure there are many who'd agree with you.

PAN DOWN: WATER FLOODS from under the bathroom door.

EXT. PRISON ROOFTOP -- NIGHT

The trio crosses the roof as Dan calls Archie by REMOTE.

RORSCHACH

Good to see you in uniform Daniel.
What brought you out of retirement?
Finally taking the mask-killer seriously? *

LAURIE

No. At least I'm not. *

RORSCHACH

Of course you haven't been attacked yet. Funny, most everyone else has.

LAURIE

We came here to rescue you, you ungrateful jerk!

DAN

Hey! Survive now, argue later!

The OWL-SHIP RISES TO THE ROOF. Laurie jumps in. Dan pauses by Rorschach, digging it. EXPLOSIONS ERUPT IN THE B/G.

DAN (cont'd)

It's good to see you too, partner.

Jazzed, Dan LEAPS into the ship...

INT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT

...Which is filled with BLUE LIGHT. JON waits inside.

DAN

Jon.

LAURIE

They... They said you were on Mars. *

DR. MANHATTAN

I am on Mars. You and I are about to have a conversation there.

LAURIE

What kind of... conversation?

DR. MANHATTAN

You are going to try to convince me to save the world.

DAN

Laurie, you can't go with him --

RORSCHACH

(calling from the roof)

Daniel. -- They're coming.

LAURIE

I have to go, I know him. He doesn't change his mind. We're going to talk. Maybe we can find some way out of this mess. I'm sorry Dan.

Laurie and Jon BURST INTO PARTICLES. Rorschach jumps down.

RORSCHACH

They're on top of us -- Where's Ms. Jupiter?

DAN

(takes the controls, grim)
She won't be coming with us.

EXT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT

The Owl-ship ZOOMS OFF under HEAVY FIRE.

INT. PRIVATE JET -- NIGHT

Adrian gazes out an oval window, SNOW HAMMERING the small plane, which jumps and jigs, landing in a BLIZZARD. Below, a narrow RUNWAY slices through a vast field of white. He is concerned... but not about the landing.

INT. KARNAK -- NIGHT

A 20-ft. DOOR opens. His servant ERIC, mid-twenties and suspiciously beautiful, attends to Adrian as he steps out of the cold. Eric takes his coat and hands him a COGNAC.

ERIC

Welcome back, sir. All your arrangements have been made.

ADRIAN

A quick workout, I think. Then activate the screens, please.

INT. ADRIAN'S GYM -- NIGHT

Adrian wears a light, polymer EXOSKELETON which lines his arms and legs with plastic steel, controlled by a CONSOLE on the belt. He is surrounded by WOODEN fighting DUMMIES. ACTIVATING the suit, he LAUNCHES into a mock battle, fists and feet FLYING at unnatural, DEVASTATING speed. In seconds, every dummy is in splinters. He pats his brow.

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

PAN DOWN ON: A HUGE BANK OF PLASMA-SCREEN TELEVISIONS, playing a hundred different programs from around the globe. Adrian sits at a MASSIVE TABLE with a CONSOLE and KEYBOARD, sipping cognac as Eric stands by.

ADRIAN

Note the sexual imagery, the violence, opposite the fatuous, almost childish visuals. The world is reaching out for simpler, and yet more visceral input...

ERIC

What does it mean?

ADRIAN

War... Buy accordingly.

EXT. NEWSSTAND -- NIGHT

The RADIO plays the news in the B/G. A GANG of THUGS with KNOT-TOP hair-dos hangs around the stand. ANGLE ON: DERF. Big, angry, high as the bejeezus.

GIRL THUG

Ay! Derf! Some super-types just sprung that Blot-face guy!

DERF

Those freaks just do whatever they please, don't they?

GIRL THUG

Some Owl guy busted him out.

THUG 2

Night Owl? My dad talks about him. Lives over some garage near here. We oughtta kick his ass.

Derf grins, puffs his smoke. Crushes it out.

INT. HOLLIS MASON'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A grinning JACK O' LANTERN. Hollis watches CNN; Grainy, shaky CLIPS of the Owl-ship. He is on the phone.

HOLLIS

Are you watching this?

DAHLIA

Just like old times, eh?

There is a KNOCK at Hollis's door.

HOLLIS

Our days were easier, I think. I better go. Got some trick or treaters at the door.

DAHLIA

Stay well, Hollis.

Hollis opens the door with a bowl of candy.

HOLLIS

Happy Ha_ owe'en kids --

The gang PILES INTO HIM. And the picture SLOWS DOWN. Hollis turns on them, mouth bleeding. HOLLIS'S POV: Is SEPIA TONED. The gang appears as a COLLECTION of VILLAINS in COSTUMES.

ANGLE ON: HOLLIS, young now, 28 -- toned muscle in an old-fashioned COSTUME. He hits Derf. The VOICES we hear come from the present, while Hollis is lost in the past.

DERF

The old bastard hit me!

THUG 2

Jesus Derf, this is an old guy...

Hollis PASTES Thug 2 in the mouth. ANGLE ON: DERF, present day. He picks up a GOLD STATUE of HOLLIS IN COSTUME whose base reads: IN GRATITUDE -- 1969.

DERF

Hey grandpa, put a brave face on this!

Hollis, old again, looks up. The SHADOW of the statue -- his former silhouette -- DESCENDS TOWARD HIS FACE. BLACK.

EXT. MARS -- NIGHT

An endless red vista. JON AND LAURIE APPEAR atop a rise.

DR. MANHATTAN

What do you think?

LAURIE

J -- huc? Hhhhhhh --

Laurie GRIPS her throat and TUMBLES down the hill. She rolls INTO JON, waiting for her at the bottom. She CLAWS at him.

DR. MANHATTAN

Forgive me. These things sometimes slip my mind.

He TOUCHES her mouth, forming a small ATMOSPHERE around her. She HEAVES in air, retching at the same time.

LAURIE

Jon you stupid bastard! Listen, you better not forget this air supply or whatever it... Oh shit.

CUT WIDE: Laurie stands before the huge GLASS STRUCTURE.

LAURIE (cont'd)
I'm on Mars.

DR. MANHATTAN
Yes. For the next hour, this is
where we debate the fate of the
world.

LAURIE
Jon, I am having enough problems
without getting into your
predestination trip.

DR. MANHATTAN
Why does my perception of time
distress you?

LAURIE
Because -- if you know the future,
why were you surprised when I left
you? When that reporter ambushed
you? Why even have a debate if you
already know the outcome?

DR. MANHATTAN
Because everything is pre-ordained,
even my responses.

LAURIE
That's all you are? The most
powerful thing in the universe and
you're just a puppet?

DR. MANHATTAN
We're all puppets, Laurie. It's
just... I can see the strings.

INT. OWL-SHIP -- HARBOR -- NIGHT

The Owl-ship is UNDERWATER, snaking through dock pilings.

RORSCHACH
I hate this. How long are we going
to stay down here?

Dan sits at the computer. Rorschach puts on his COSTUME.

DAN
Until we figure out what to do.
Hey, it's no picnic for me either.

RORSCHACH

Implying something? About my coat, perhaps? Old and musty. We can't all keep our hands clean.

DAN

We've taken enough unnecessary risks getting your outfit.

RORSCHACH

Cowering in the sludge. Looking up files. That's unnecessary. Give me the smallest finger on a man's hand --- and this face.

DAN

Look, the cancer plot against Jon comes first. Blake was killed when he discovered it.

RORSCHACH

And Moloch knew that Blake suspected something.

DAN

Moloch and the others on the cancer list all worked for a company called Pyramid Developments. Maybe Pyramid had his place bugged. That would explain how they framed you.

RORSCHACH

What about Veidt?

DAN

Adrian's a problem. That was a straightforward assassination attempt.

RORSCHACH

Exactly. So trace the killer. Go to bars, squeeze people. You've been lazing around too long.

DAN

Listen I have HAD IT. Who the hell do you think you are? You live off people while insulting them! No one complains because you're a god damned lunatic! -- I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. Maybe you're right, maybe --

RORSCHACH

Daniel...

Dan turns. Rorschach holds out his hand.

RORSCHACH (cont'd)

You are... a good friend. I'm sorry
that it's, sometimes difficult.

DAN

(he shakes, touched)

Hey forget it. It's okay man.

Dan releases his hand with some effort. He takes the stick.

DAN (cont'd)

You're right. We should head up.

EXT. OWL-SHIP -- HARBOR -- NIGHT

The Owl-Ship BURSTS THROUGH THE SURFACE OF THE WATER.

DAN (V.O.)

Let's really start plumbing the
depths.

INT. HAPPY HARRY'S BAR -- NIGHT

The same seedy bar. The crowd goes SILENT as Dan and
Rorschach enter. They approach a sweaty, trembling BARTENDER.

HAPPY HARRY

Rorschach. How you doin'?

RORSCHACH

Very well, Harry. Yourself?

HAPPY HARRY

Oh God. Please don't kill anybody.

Rorschach's voice carries easily in the small bar.

RORSCHACH

Adrian Veidt was shot at by a man
named Roy Chess. We would like to
know who hired him. But don't
worry, I won't insult your
legendary underworld solidarity by
suggesting you give us the name
without torture.

As one, the PATRONS CLEAR AWAY from ONE MAN at the bar.
Rorschach approaches him. The guy BRANDISHES his GLASS.

INFORMANT

Stay away from me! You'll get this
in your squidgy face!

Rorschach grabs the man's fist around the glass.

RORSCHACH

Roy Chess... How's your game?

Rorschach SQUEEZES, SHATTERING THE GLASS in the man's hand.

INFORMANT

AHH! I don't know anything! I
just handled the envelopes!

RORSCHACH

What envelopes?

Dan notices a KNOT-TOP GANG MEMBER trying to slip away.

INFORMANT

One with cash. One with
instructions. Some guy wanted a
hit. Nobody mentioned Veidt's
name. I'd never knowingly cross
one of you people! My boss offered
it to me -- Pyramid Deliveries! I
figured on a little easy money, now
anyone who was in on anything is
getting killed. Overdoses,
accidents, it's all bullshit! My
boss fell under a subway train.

ANGLE ON: DAN, near the door, STOPS the Knot-Top.

DAN

Going somewhere, son?

KNOT-TOP

I knew you'd hassle me. Just cause
Knot-tops murdered that Mason guy.

PUSH IN ON: DAN, taking this in.

ANGLE ON: RORSCHACH and the Informant.

INFORMANT

You gotta protect me.

RORSCHACH

Why? Because you didn't know who's
murder you were arranging?

(MORE)

RORSCHACH (cont'd)
Maybe the man arranging yours
doesn't know either. Nothing
personal eh?

A SCREAM tears through the bar. The KNOT-TOP CRASHES INTO A
TABLE. Dan grips him by the collar, enraged. -- Choking him.

DAN
Who did it? Who killed Hollis?

KNOT-TOP
Don't know... kids saw gang...

DAN
You tell them they're dead! You
know how much fire-power I've got
floating out there? Oh god damn.
God damn god damn god damn...

Dan begins to break. Rorschach quietly pulls him away.

RORSCHACH
Not in front of civilians.

INT. OWL-SHIP -- NIGHT

Dan sits at the stick, head down.

DAN
You were right. They're killing us.
(beat)
We need Adrian.

EXT. MARS -- NIGHT

Jon steps onto the uppermost platform of the glass structure.

DR. MANHATTAN
Our conversation commences when you
surprise me with the information
that you and Dreiberg have been
sleeping together.

LAURIE
You... know about me and Dan?

DR. MANHATTAN
Not yet. In a few moments, you're
going to tell me.

LAURIE
Agh! This is so typical of you!
Do you know what a relief it is to
be with somebody human, like Dan?

DR. MANHATTAN

You mean you're sleeping with Dan
Dreiberg?

Contemplating this, he steps to the balcony's edge.

LAURIE

But you already know. You said --

DR. MANHATTAN

I said, often, that you were my
only remaining link with the world.
Now that link is shattered. Don't
you see the futility of asking me
to save a world that I no longer
have any stake in?

LAURIE

That's ridiculous. The Earth is
too important to hinge on one
relationship.

DR. MANHATTAN

Not to me. My red world here means
more to me than your blue one.
I'll show you around if you like.

The giant glass structure begins to RUMBLE.

LAURIE

What's happening? I'm not in the
mood for jokes.

DR. MANHATTAN

Nor am I. Believe me --

WIDE: The clockwork GLASS STRUCTURE RISES FAR INTO THE AIR.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I fully understand the gravity of
the situation.

INT. ADRIAN VEIDT'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

The huge office is dark and empty but for ornamental Egyptian
caskets. Rorschach checks a CALENDAR on the wall.

RORSCHACH

"November 1st, leave for Karnak
4:30." Karnak?

DAN

His Antarctic retreat. Damn.

Dan hits the desk. The movement "wakes" the computer, DATA runs up the screen in a rush.

RORSCHACH
What's it doing?

DAN
Dumping files, I think. Hey, maybe
Adrian's computer can access
information on Pyramid.

RORSCHACH
If we're being eliminated to set
off World War III... How does a
corporation benefit from nuclear
Armageddon?

DAN
I was hoping Adrian could help us
with that.

The COMPUTER FREEZES, asking for a PASSWORD. Dan thinks,
types in RAMESES. Rorschach examines an ANUBIS SARCOPHAGUS.

RORSCHACH
Funny... The Pharaohs looked
forward to the end of the world.
They believed the dead would rise
to claim their hearts from little
golden jars. Must be holding their
breath with anticipation.

INFORMATION STREAMS across the screen. PUSH IN ON: A
CORPORATE NAME amidst Adrian's holdings: *Pyramid Deliveries*.

DAN
Oh... no.

RORSCHACH
Found something?

DAN
We're in trouble. The person
behind all this -- The person we're
up against... I think it's Adrian.

RORSCHACH
But... Veidt was a target.

DAN
I know. Grab those papers.

The Owl-ship RISES INTO THE WINDOW BEHIND DAN.

DAN (CONT'D)

Its a long flight to Antarctica.

EXT. MARS -- NIGHT

The glass structure glides over the severe Martian landscape.
LAURIE picks up a glass DECANter.

LAURIE

What's in this bottle?

DR. MANHATTAN

What would you like in the bottle?

LAURIE

Uh... Champagne?

In the thin atmosphere, the CRYSTAL STOPPER in the bottle suddenly BLOWS OFF with a POP. Champagne BUBBLES OVER the neck. Laurie shrugs, swigs it right from the bottle.

LAURIE (cont'd)

Jon. Humanity is about to become extinct. Doesn't that bother you? All those people dead?

DR. MANHATTAN

All that pain and conflict done with at last? That doesn't bother me, no.

LAURIE

What about life itself? Doesn't that count for something?

DR. MANHATTAN

For what? Mars gets along without a single microorganism. See: The south pole below us. No life at all. Just giant steps, ninety feet high, scoured by dust and wind into a constantly changing topographical landscape ten thousand years wide. Tell me... Would it be greatly improved by an oil pipeline?

LAURIE

In those terms, sure, mankind hasn't helped the world. But what about the lives of artists, poets, scientists? Hell, my life has to be worth something.

(MORE)

LAURIE (cont'd)

Ordinary people, the things that happen to them. Doesn't that move you more than a pile of rubble?

DR. MANHATTAN

No.

EXT. CITY STREETS-- NIGHT

ANGLE UP ON: Rorschach and Dan boarding the Owl-ship from the office window, the name VEIDT looming high over them.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Rorschach's journal. Final entry. Dreiberg is convinced that Veidt is behind everything. Apparently, the Owl-ship is capable of the trip to Antarctica. But are we?

The ship CRUISES through the high street canyons.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I cannot imagine a more dangerous opponent. Veidt is faster than Dreiberg, perhaps faster than me. He will likely kill us both. I tell Dreiberg I need to check my maildrop. He believes me.

Rorschach descends a LADDER from the ship. He places his JOURNAL in an ENVELOPE.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I have done my best to make this legible. Whatever the nature of this conspiracy, Adrian Veidt is responsible.

He drops the envelope into a mailbox. Climbs up the ladder.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I appreciate your recent support and hope the world survives long enough for this to reach you. For my own part, I regret nothing. I have lived my life, free of compromise, and step into the shadow now without complaint. Rorschach, November 1st, 2004.

Rorschach disappears into the dark HATCH.

EXT. CITY STREETS -- DAWN

A MAILMAN passes the NEWSSTAND, its vendor, and the same kid, still reading his comic. He passes the INSTITUTE FOR EXTRASPATIAL STUDIES. Below this, we read: A DIVISION OF DIMENSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS -- VEIDT ENTERPRISES INC.

INT. THE NEW FRONTIERSMAN -- MORNING

The MAILMAN hands the MAIL to a corpulent EDITOR'S ASSISTANT.

EDITOR

SEYMOUR! Is that Conheim's editorial cartoon?

SEYMOUR

It's the mail. Someone sent us a diary. "It didn't used to be like this. Once, heroes walked these streets...."

EDITOR

I don't wanna hear some jerk's life story. Chuck it in the crank file.

Seymour throws Rorschach's JOURNAL into a PILE of LETTERS and boxes. He throws the rest of the mail ON TOP OF IT.

EDITOR (cont'd)

War's coming Seymour. I won't see integrity buried beneath an avalanche of drivel.

EXT. ANTARCTICA -- DUSK

EDITOR (V.O.)

Hell, the birds could be in the air right now.

The OWL-SHIP cruises through a TOWERING CLOUD BANK. Below, a slate-grey OCEAN churns.

INT. OWL-SHIP -- DUSK

Dan dips below the clouds, HAMMERING SNOW buffets the ship. A halting WHINE sputters from the engines. Through the snow-flecked windshield, a HUGE CLIFF appears before them.

RORSCHACH

Daniel.

DAN

I see it. Hold on, she's icing up.

Dan pulls the stick back. The ship SHUDDERS.

EXT. ANTARCTICA'-- DUSK

The ship, tiny before the massive ice-wall, climbs slowly. It's going to be close. The wall is 100 yards away now, the top-most edge barely in view. 50 yards. 20...

RORSCHACH

Daniel...

DAN

I know! We'll make it.

RORSCHACH

No. The engines just stopped.

The ship BARELY clears the cliff. BOUNCING hard, it SKIPS across the snow like a stone, finally CRASHING INTO A DRIFT.

EXT. MARS -- NIGHT

Laurie hair blows in the cold wind. She lowers her head.

LAURIE

I give up. Can't you just tell me how this ends and save us all the trouble?

DR. MANHATTAN

It ends... with you in tears.

LAURIE

You mean... I lose? You don't come back to Earth?

DR. MANHATTAN

I return to Earth at some point. The streets are filled with death.

LAURIE

You mean there's going to be a war. An actual, nuclear war.

DR. MANHATTAN

I can't be sure. There's some sort of static preventing any clear impression of the future.

LAURIE

Static?

DR. MANHATTAN

Tachyons. Microscopic particles
which travel backward in time.
Can't you see them?

He touches her eyes. And suddenly, she can see as he does.
LAURIE'S ENHANCED POV: The landscape dissolves into BILLIONS
OF GLOWING PARTICLES. A HAILSTORM of PARTICLES FLIES AT HER,
causing: A SUDDEN FLASH OF MEMORY. Her parents FIGHTING.

LARRY SCHEXNEYDER (O.S.)

*What it means is a broken marriage!
An uncertain future for our child!*

DAHLIA (O.S.)

*MY child! That's what this is
about, remember?*

DR. MANHATTAN

Tachyons are a rare occurrence.
The detonation of nuclear warheads
could conceivably be the cause.

LAURIE

Jon you've got to stop it!
Everyone will die!

DR. MANHATTAN

And the universe will not even
notice. Look at the dual moons,
aren't they breathtaking?

Above, TWO MOONS cross overhead. One is HUGE, CRIMSON RED,
the smaller is a delicate SHELL PINK. Spectacular.

DR. MANHATTAN (cont'd)

Do you know what names mankind
chose to brand them with? Deimos
and Phobos... Panic and fear.

Another FLASH OF MEMORY: Laurie confronting Eddie.

LAURIE

*What kind of man are you to force a
woman into having sex against her
will?*

EDDIE BLAKE

Only once...

The bombardment of particles, memories, and the effects of
the Champagne force Laurie to try to clear her head.

LAURIE

You're right Jon. Our grubby little human encounters, all of it. Next to a, a Nutrino, what does it matter? Look Jon, I'm not going to debate you when you clearly don't see anything terribly miraculous about life. I guess quantum physics doesn't allow for miracles.

DR. MANHATTAN

No, Thermodynamic miracles are --

LAURIE

Oh God. Land this thing. Now.

DR. MANHATTAN

On the Argyre Planitia? -- As you wish.

The structure descends. Laurie walks down the stairs.

LAURIE

That's it then. You can send me back to Earth to fry with Dan and my mom and all the other worthless humans. And look, you were wrong. You said this ended with me in tears and see? Not a damp eye in the house. Maybe you're wrong about everything.

Jon is waiting for her at the bottom of the stairs.

DR. MANHATTAN

Laurie. You complain that I refuse to see life on life's terms. And yet you refuse to see my point. If only you'd try to see the whole continuum, life's pattern, you'd understand. But you deliberately shut it out. As if you're afraid to see.

The MEMORIES hit Laurie with greater frequency. FLASH --

EDDIE BLAKE

Christ, can't a guy talk to his, you know, his old friend's daughter? What do you think I am?

LAURIE

I'm through talking about my life!
Life has no pattern, okay?

DR. MANHATTAN

I think you're avoiding something. *

LAURIE

Don't be stupid. I'm not --

QUICK, ABRUPT FLASHES -- EDDIE'S VOICE runs together.

EDDIE BLAKE (V.O.)

*His, you know, his old friend's
daughter? -- Only once. What do
you think I am?*

Laurie pulls EVERYTHING from her bag. Amongst it all are her
and her mother's PRESS CLIPPINGS.

LAURIE

Look, here it is! My life! You're
right! It means nothing!

EDDIE BLAKE (V.O.)

*Old friend's daughter? His, You
know, his -- What do you think I
am? Friend's daughter -- only once
-- his, you know, his --*

DAHLIA (V.O.) *

I just couldn't sustain the anger.

LAURIE

No. No no no no. Not him.

Laurie falls to her knees, a NOSTALGIA PERFUME BOTTLE in her
hand. We CUT TO: *

EXT. BANQUET HALL -- TEN YEARS AGO *

Eddie exits the banquet hall alley, whistling. *

Laurie PEERS into the dark alley that Eddie has just vacated. *
A sudden SPLASH of HEADLIGHTS illuminates a BODY. DUMONT, *
the cigar smoker who called Laurie's mother a whore, sits in *
the alley with his neck broken. Her eyes widen as Eddie's *
haunting whistling drifts back to her. *

EDDIE BLAKE (V.O.) *

His, you know -- his daughter. *

EXT. MARS -- NIGHT

Laurie grips the perfume bottle, screaming.

LAURIE

NO!

She WHIPS the bottle at the structure. The huge glass structure CRUMBLES and COLLAPSES around them. Laurie sobs.

LAURIE (cont'd)

Edward Blake was my father. My life is meaningless. One big joke.

Jon kneels down beside her.

DR. MANHATTAN

I don't think your life is meaningless.

LAURIE

Well, of course you're going to say that, you... You don't? But, you've been saying...

DR. MANHATTAN

I changed my mind.

LAURIE

You... Why?

DR. MANHATTAN

I tried to explain. Thermodynamic miracles. Events with odds against so astronomical -- like oxygen suddenly turning to gold. I long to witness such a thing. And yet, out of the millions upon millions of cells competing to create a life over generation after generation: Finally, your mother loves a man she has every reason to hate. And out of that inherent contradiction, against unfathomable odds -- It was you, only you, that emerged. To distill so specific a form from all of that chaos... Your creation is like turning air into gold. A miracle.

LAURIE

But if my birth is a miracle... you could say that about anyone.

DR. MANHATTAN

Yes. But it becomes so commonplace
that we forget. I forget.

We see them from very HIGH UP, now, standing amidst a RUBBLE
OF GLASS in a DEEP CRATER. And still we rise up.

DR. MANHATTAN (cont'd)

I forget that life is the clay in
which the forces that shape all
things leave their fingerprints
most clearly. Dry your eyes.

We see the CRATER in it's entirety -- the ARGYRE PLANITIA
(This is a real place BTW). Round, two BOULDERS set side by
side, a RIDGE of land curling below it... Like a smiley-face.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.) (cont'd)

And let's go home.

INT. OWL-SHIP -- DUSK

Dan OPENS the HATCH. Shrieking WIND blows the snow in. Dan
wears a WHITE, FUR-LINED SNOW-OWL costume.

DAN

You sure I can't fit you with
something warmer?

RORSCHACH

Fine like this.

Rorschach pulls up his trench-collar against the cold. Dan
pulls two stand-up HOVER-SCOOTERS from an outside hatch.

DAN

Tsk, look at that ice. Have to fix
that when we get back.

RORSCHACH

If we get back.

Resigned, Dan nods. They ride the scooters into the snow.
CLOSE ON: DAN, eyes widening behind his goggles.

ANGLE ON: KARNAK -- a GARGANTUAN, MONOLITHIC BUILDING, rising
black and ominous out of the snow-scape.

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- DUSK

PAN DOWN: THE LONG TABLE, where Adrian and Eric eat a gourmet
meal. The giant plasma-screens above the table, now show ONE
IMAGE -- ALEXANDER THE GREAT slicing the Gordian Knot.

ADRIAN

Try the wine, Eric. It's over two hundred years old.

Eric pours a glass. Adrian points out the digitized mural.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

Do you know this painting?
Alexander of Macedonia. Before his conquest of Phoenicia, he struck North for Gordium, where the world's greatest puzzle awaited him. A great knot which could not be untied. For a young man determined to rule the world, it was a challenge he couldn't resist. He sliced it in two with his sword.
-- Lateral thinking, you see.

BUBASTIS, his genetically-altered LYNX appears at his hand.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

What is it girl?

He clicks a REMOTE. The TV SCREENS switch to MULTIPLE VIEWS OF RORSCHACH AND DAN approaching on their scooters. Bubastis growls. Adrian scratches her ruff. She purrs.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

Ah. It's all right girl.
Everything's all right.

EXT. KARNAK -- NIGHT

Dan spots a sealed ENTRANCE TUNNEL. He pulls up to it, moving fast. He jumps off the scooter and uses a LASER to BURN THROUGH the locking mechanism. Dan forces the door open, revealing a dark, TUBULAR HALLWAY. They enter the high-tech tunnel.

DAN

Jesus... This must be how ordinary people feel around us.

INT. TECHNOLOGY ROOM -- NIGHT

This room is FILLED with devices that make Dan's Owl-Chamber seems like a child's playset. They pass a WEAPON'S CLOSET.

DAN

I don't understand any of this.
Adrian's a pacifist.
(MORE)

DAN (cont'd)

He's never killed anyone in his life. He's a vegetarian for Christ's sake.

RORSCHACH

Hitler was a vegetarian. If you're squeamish, leave Veidt to me. We'll only get one chance.

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Cautious, Dan and Rorschach push through a massive door. Across the cavernous room, Adrian sits with his back to them, eating dinner. Another young man sits at the table as well, but neither mark the presence of the two intruders. Rorschach moves in to attack from behind, utterly silent.

A GOLDEN SOUP TUREEN sits before Adrian. He can see Rorschach in its reflection. He puts down his knife. Rorschach STRIKES -- but Adrian has already moved, gripping Rorschach's arm, he PINS IT to the table with his FORK. He drives a FIST into Rorschach's face. Dan aims his PEN-LASER.

DAN

Adrian, don't make me --

Adrian lifts the TOP off the tureen. Dan FIRES the laser, which is DEFLECTED off the lid's REFLECTIVE SURFACE, and then SLINGS the round lid into DAN'S NOSE. Blood sprays; Dan falls back, dislodging a very dead ERIC from his seat. The body and Dan hit the ground simultaneously, as does the poisoned WINE GLASS, which SHATTERS.

ADRIAN

Now. What can I do for you?

DAN

You know! You killed Jacobi!

ADRIAN

Yes.

DAN

You set Jon up. Hired those people. You gave them cancer...

ADRIAN

Yes.

DAN

And when the Comedian found out, you killed him too.

*

ADRIAN

Not until I absolutely had to.
Frankly, I really didn't think he'd
talk. But by the time he visited
poor Moloch, he was cracking.
Guess he couldn't take the joke
after all.

DAN

... What's the joke, Adrian?

Adrian looks at Dan, as if disappointed that he doesn't know.

ADRIAN

Who watches the Watchmen?

DAN

(quiet, horrified)
... Who?

ADRIAN

Nobody.

EXT. NEWSSTAND -- NIGHT

ANGLE ON: THE DIMENSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS BUILDING. A CUBE-
TRUCK pulls up to the curb. Four WORKMEN, carefully unload a
LARGE SQUARE, TARP-COVERED OBJECT from the truck.

INT. DIMENSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS -- NIGHT

Wheeling the tarp-covered object into a LAB, they UNCOVER IT,
revealing a FRAME, constructed with intricate, CLOCKWORK-LIKE
COGS. And in the frame, a 10-FT. DIAMETER LENS. TWO MEN,
outfitted like ARMORED ASTRONAUTS, standing before a
computerized GATE. The astronauts click on their OXYGEN.

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

DAN

Why Adrian? Just tell me why --

ADRIAN

Because the world is an
unravellable tangle of hatred,
bigotry and fear. A Gordian knot
with only one way to slice through
it. A universal, outside threat.

DAN

What have you done?

INT. DIMENSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS -- NIGHT

ADRIAN (V.O.)
I've saved the world.

The computerized GATE suddenly CRACKLES with ELECTRIC LIGHT. A TIMER labelled DIMENSIONAL JUMP SEQUENCING counts down from TWELVE. The gate energy COALESCES into a BLINDING LIGHT, reflected in the MASKS of the space-suits.

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

RORSCHACH has come around, blood on his mask. Silent, he PULLS the fork from his sleeve. He moves up behind Adrian.

ADRIAN
I've placed a molecularly-enhanced lens a relatively short distance from the sun.

Rorschach STABS at Adrian with the fork, while Adrian spins, picking up a SERVING TRAY. The fork IMPALES the tray. Adrian wrenches Rorschach's arm, pulling his mask aside and SMASHING him in the face.

INT. DIMENSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS -- NIGHT

The space men wheel the giant LENS into the beautiful, glowing light. They give the CONTROL ROOM a THUMBS UP -- and step through. In a FLASH, THEY ARE TELEPORTED --

EXT. SPACE -- NIGHT

-- Mere thousands of miles from the SUN. Their ARMOR protects them from the devastating heat. The TELEPORTATION GATE continues to CRACKLE behind them. Their ticket home.

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Rorschach, hurt badly now, gets roughly to his feet. He moves for Adrian again, but Dan grabs him, pointing out the HUGE LYNX which moves in to protect its master.

ADRIAN (V.O.)
Simultaneously, every leader of a geopolitically influential country is receiving an untraceable remote box which can only be contacted from this table. Currently, the screen on each box reads:

On the TVs: CEASE ALL HOSTILITIES. AWAIT INSTRUCTIONS.

INT. VARIOUS CAPITALS -- NIGHT/DAY

VARIOUS CAPITALS, various WORLD LEADERS are being handed small BLACK BOXES with READOUT WINDOWS.

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

A clock behind Dan reads ONE MINUTE TO MIDNIGHT.

ADRIAN

Once the lens is in place, I'll fire a beam of concentrated solar energy into the city we call home -- killing every. Last. Soul.

DAN

Adrian... Thank god we came here before you went any further with this insanity. When were you planning to do all this?

A BELL begins to CHIME through the building. The clock over Dan's shoulder CLICKS TO MIDNIGHT.

ADRIAN

"Do it"? Dan, I'm not some serial movie villain. Do you seriously think I would explain my master stroke... if there was still the slightest chance you could stop it?

PUSH IN ON: ADRIAN, pressing a button on the table CONSOLE.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

I "did it" just now.

EXT. SPACE -- NIGHT

The astronauts seem STARTLED as the CLOCKWORK FRAME of the LENS ACTIVATES, adjusting the lens into place. They try to back away, but it is too late. The sun ILLUMINATES the lens, and the resultant FLARE OF LIGHT OBLITERATES THE TWO MEN.

INT. DIMENSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS -- NIGHT

Through the gate, a residual SUNBURST BLASTS through the teleportation gate DESTROYING everyone inside.

EXT. NEWSSTAND -- NIGHT

Both the Newsvendor and the kid stand, staring at the sky, which has begun to LIGHTEN. It is DAWN, despite the late hour. People on the sidewalks stare.

ANGLE ON: THE HORIZON, as it grows even BRIGHTER.

CLOSE ON: THE KID'S HAND, as he unconsciously grabs the Newsvendor's. The sky goes BRILLIANT WHITE. People begin to SCREAM and RUN. But the blazing light OVERTAKES THEM ALL.

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

DAN

The whole city... You're joking.

RORSCHACH

No, listen to his voice. He did it. Millions of people.

DAN

Nobody could do that.

RORSCHACH

He did it. Get rid of the cat, Veidt.

ADRIAN

Please, Rorschach. -- You're going to chafe my knuckles.

Rorschach's fists CLENCH. Dan is desperate not to believe.

DAN

He's making it up. Adrian, an assassin tried to kill you.

ADRIAN

Yes. I hired him. Through third parties which are all dead. When I fed him the cyanide capsule, I believe he realized this.

DAN

What if he'd shot you first instead of your secretary?

ADRIAN

Then I'd have had to catch the bullet, wouldn't I?

DAN

Come on, that's... You couldn't really do that?

Smiling, Adrian gives a little shrug.

EXT. CITY STREETS -- NIGHT

EMPTY STREETS, filled with BLOWING SMOKE. GLOWING PARTICLES begin to COALESCE INTO JON AND LAURIE, but the teleportation is FALTERING, almost SHORTING OUT. Together they FALL from the re-integration. Jon keeps his feet, Laurie falls.

LAURIE

God, Jon, what was that --

DR. MANHATTAN

Interference... Cataclysmic interference.

PUSH IN ON: LAURIE, seeing what Jon has already seen. She SCREAMS, the sound ECHOING off the empty street canyon. As the blowing smoke CLEARS, THOUSANDS OF BLACK SILHOUETTES are revealed, IMPRINTED ON THE WALLS, the sidewalks. Everywhere.

THE NEWSSTAND. A SILHOUETTE of a MAN AND A BOY holding hands.

LAURIE

Gone. They're all... just gone.

JON'S POV: OF THE SMOKE, GLITTERING PARTICLES.

DR. MANHATTAN

No. They're still here. They've just been sublimated.

Laurie picks up a PISTOL, lying in the street beside a BADGE.

LAURIE

How could this happen?

DR. MANHATTAN

I don't know... I had forgotten what that was like.

LAURIE

Take us away, Jon. Please.

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm sorry. This must be upsetting for you. I have traced the source of the Tachyons to the Antarctic continent. Shall we?

LAURIE

Yes. Anywhere.

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

DAN

You'll be caught. Found out.

ADRIAN

By whom? Anyone with even the tiniest bit of information is dead. Killed by killers who were killed themselves. A lethal pyramid. There's no-one left to catch me.

DAN

What about us?

ADRIAN

Yes, I'd been wondering about that myself.

Bubastis GROWLS, low in her throat.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

What is it girl?

Adrian clicks on the OUTSIDE CAMERAS. In the many screens, JON AND LAURIE PARTICLE-BURST ROUGHLY INTO THE SNOW.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

Oh, dear.

EXT. KARNAK -- NIGHT

Laurie retches in the snow. Jon sees the building.

DR. MANHATTAN

Adrian. Of course. Who else would have the resources to --

LAURIE

That's Adrian's fortress. Are you saying that he's responsible for...

As if drugged, Jon walks toward the building.

DR. MANHATTAN

Yes... He killed Blake and destroyed the city. Excuse me, Rorschach, I'm informing Laurie ninety seconds ago.

LAURIE

Rorschach? Jon, don't start that crap now. Not here. Did he kill them? Did Veidt kill all those...

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm sorry. The tachyons. They're... muddling things up. I'd better follow him inside...

LAURIE

Jon? Don't you leave me out here!

But in a BURST, he is gone. Freezing, Laurie spots the HATCH Dan burned through earlier and RUNS for it.

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Jon APPEARS in the dining room. Adrian BOLTS through a door. Bubastis RUNS AFTER HER MASTER.

RORSCHACH

Don't let him escape. He killed Blake, destroyed the city.

Jon calmly walks after Adrian. Drugged, passing Rorschach.

DR. MANHATTAN

Yes... He killed Blake and destroyed the city. Excuse me, Rorschach, I'm informing Laurie ninety seconds ago.

DAN

What? Where's Laurie? Jon, are you alright? You seem drugged...

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm sorry. The tachyons. They're... muddling things up. I'd better follow him inside...

Jon follows Adrian through the door.

INT. TECH-ROOM -- NIGHT

An AMAZING COLLECTION of advanced technology. Computers, a WALL OF ADVANCED WEAPONS. Experiments of all kinds. JON'S POV: PARTICLES, the TACHYONS BOMBARD HIM.

DR. MANHATTAN

Adrian, you're being stupid. Even if I can't predict where I'm going to find you, I can turn the walls to glass. The tachyons were clever, but -- ah.

BUBASTIS stands in a metal LANEWAY. Jon approaches the cat.

DR. MANHATTAN (cont'd)

Very well, if I must follow this through to the bitter end.

ADRIAN (V.O.)

Bubastis...

ANGLE ON: ADRIAN, on the other side of the wall. He flicks a SWITCH. CLOSE ON ITS LABEL: INTRINSIC FIELD SUBTRACTOR.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

Forgive me.

ANGLE ON: JON and BUBASTIS. Her FUR STANDS ON END as ENERGY CRACKLES BETWEEN THE METAL WALLS. Bubastis HOWLS.

DR. MANHATTAN

Veidt? Don't --

The LIGHT OBLITERATES both JON and the big cat. Adrian steps around the lead shield.

ADRIAN

Hm. You know, I really wasn't sure that would work.

LAURIE (V.O.)

Veidt...

Adrian turns. Laurie levels the GUN at him.

LAURIE (cont'd)

You're an asshole.

BANG -- Adrian FALLS. Gun smoking, Laurie approaches him. ADRIAN'S BLEEDING HAND falls from his chest to the floor.

With a bullet held safely in his palm.

Adrian KICKS LAURIE IN THE STOMACH. She drops, winded.

DAN

LAURIE! If you've hurt her, I'll --

ADRIAN

Oh Daniel... Grow up.

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Rorschach, Dan -- helping Laurie on his arm -- follow Adrian.

ADRIAN

What has your schoolboy heroism
ever achieved, apart from failing
to prevent the planet's salvation?
And yet, that failure will usher in
an age of illumination so dazzling
that people will have no choice but
to turn away from the heart of
darkness and stare into... the...

Adrian trails off, realizing the BLUE LIGHT which flows
through the windows. Then, a HUGE VOICE:

DR. MANHATTAN (O.S.)

I AM VERY DISAPPOINTED IN YOU
VEIDT. VERY DISAPPOINTED.

JON, now 100 FEET TALL, SMASHES THROUGH THE WALL. Adrian
crawls desperately for a REMOTE on the floor.

DR. MANHATTAN (cont'd)

(shrinking to normal)

Restructuring my Intrinsic Field
was the first trick I learned. It
didn't kill Osterman. Did you
seriously think it would kill me?
I have walked across the sun. I
have witnessed events so
infinitesimal, they make the world
of atoms appear like giants. You --
are nothing but a man. And this
"world's smartest man" means no
more to me than does its smartest
termite.

(seeing Adrian's REMOTE)

What is that Veidt? Some new
ultimate weapon?

ADRIAN

You could say that.

He CLICKS the remote. INTERNATIONAL NEWS IMAGES appear on
the TVs. ALL are talking about the deaths in America.
Adrian MUTES them one by one, until only CNN is left.

CNN ANCHOR

... reacting to the unexplained tragedy in America, world leaders are withdrawing their forces as they try to understand what the world is dealing with. Over one million troops have been ordered to stand down in Kashmir, while in North Korea, massing tanks have been ordered stopped. Clearly, whatever has occurred in America this morning has had a sobering affect on nations which, not one hour ago, were preparing to destroy each other.

Adrian watches, tears in his eyes.

ADRIAN

I did it... I DID IT! I've saved Earth from Hell. Next, I will elevate her to the vaulting stature of Heaven.

LAURIE

Next? You can't get away with this.

ADRIAN

Will you expose me, undoing the peace millions have died for? Imagine it. The leaders of the world sitting, anxiously awaiting instructions from the newest, the only -- remaining world power. I have spent my life studying the greatest cultures of the world, at the height of their ascendancies. Now I will spend the rest anonymously instructing those world leaders step by step toward a united, planet-wide Utopia. Adrian Veidt will have died in the blast. And I will live here alone, controlling the world.

DAN

And anyone who disobeys gets their cities destroyed.

ADRIAN

That is implied yes, but after today... No-one will disobey.

(MORE)

ADRIAN (cont'd)

You can't turn me in. Morally
you're in checkmate. Just like
Blake.

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm afraid he's right. Exposing
him would only doom the world to
nuclear destruction.

DAN

All we did was fail to stop him
saving the Earth...

ADRIAN

We'll compromise. Keep the secret.
Live your lives. Enjoy the peace.

DAN

Jesus. How can human beings make
decisions like this? -- I guess we
have no choice.

RORSCHACH

You're joking, of course.

Rorschach turns for the exit, resolute. Adrian and Jon's
eyes meet -- an unspoken communication between them.

DAN

Rorschach! This is too big to be
hard-assed! We have to compromise!

RORSCHACH

Never. Not even in the face of
Armageddon. Never compromise.

He exits. Dan runs after him. For the first time, Laurie
realizes that both Adrian and Jon are gone too. She is alone.
Eyes streaming, shock settling in, she shivers, looks up at
the muted NEWS SHOTS of the EMPTY, SMOKING CITY.

EXT. KARNAK -- NIGHT

Rorschach mounts his hoverbike. The night is calm. Cold.

DR. MANHATTAN (O.S.)

Where are you going?

Dr. Manhattan stands ten feet away, blocking the path.

RORSCHACH

Back to the Owl-ship. Back to
America. People must be told.
Evil must be punished.

DR. MANHATTAN

Rorschach... You know I can't let
you do that.

Rorschach pauses. DAN pelts for the entryway.

DAN

RORSCHACH!

RORSCHACH

Of course. You must protect
Veidt's Utopia. One more body
amongst millions makes little
difference. What are you waiting
for? -- Do it.

Rorschach removes his mask, tears in his eyes.

DAN

RORSCHACH, NO!

RORSCHACH

DO IT!

Jon waves his hand. Rorschach BURSTS INTO NOTHING. Dan
falls to the snow, weeping. Jon sits as well, contemplating
the BURN-MARK where Rorschach once stood.

INT. KARNAK -- HALLS -- NIGHT

In shock, Laurie walks through the massive, empty halls.
Slowly, she breaks into a RUN, tears flying. She runs
blindly into a room. Etched into the wall is the word: POOL

INT. POOL ROOM -- NIGHT

The soft LIGHTING automatically illuminates another CAVERNOUS
ROOM. Laurie fetches up against a PILLAR, heaving sobs
wracking her body. A hand falls on her shoulder and she
SCREAMS. It is Dan. Tears slip from his mask as well. She
grabs him. Kissing him desperately.

DAN

What is that? What is that you
smell of?

LAURIE

Nostalgia.

A HUGE RUMBLE as a great portion of the FLOOR RISES,
releasing STEAM, revealing a HUGE SWIMMING POOL. Before the
great pool they kiss, desperate to savor their survival.

INT. POOL ROOM -- LATER

Dan and Laurie sleep, wrapped snugly in the his SnowOwl suit. JON stands over them. He smiles. This is the way things should be... and walks off across the surface of the pool.

INT. ADRIAN'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

A room as ridiculously big as the rest. Adrian sits on the edge of an elephantine bed, watching many TV's. Jon enters.

ADRIAN

Jon. I've made myself feel every death -- every innocent face I've murdered to save humanity. -- But you understand, don't you?

DR. MANHATTAN

Without condoning or condemning, I understand. I'm leaving this galaxy for one a little less complicated.

ADRIAN

Leaving? I thought you'd regained an interest in human life.

DR. MANHATTAN

I have. I think maybe I'll create some. Goodbye Adrian.

ADRIAN

Wait! Before you go... I did the right thing, didn't I? In the end?

JON

The end? Nothing ends, Adrian. Nothing ever ends.

ADRIAN

Jon? Wait! What do you mean by --

But Dr. Manhattan is finally, uncompromisingly... gone.

INT. POOL ROOM -- HOURS LATER

Dan sweats, gripped by a nightmare. His eyes SNAP OPEN.

CLOSE ON: LAURIE, waking too. She rolls over. Dan is gone. *

INT. KARNAK HALLS -- NIGHT

Laurie searches the MASSIVE corridors, room after room. Dan is nowhere to be found. Laurie is lost and very alone.

INT. KARNAK -- BALLROOM -- NIGHT

Laurie enters a pitch black hall.

LAURIE

Dan?

At the sound of her voice, the automatic LIGHTS come up -- revealing a REFRIGERATED GLASS WALL with literally THOUSANDS of BOTTLES OF CHAMPAGNE. Dom, Crystal, the best of the best, stretching into infinity.

LAURIE

Whoa.

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

The TVs are DARK now. The door the TECH-ROOM SWINGS SHUT as if someone has just passed through.

INT. ADRIAN'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

ADRIAN wakes, sensing someone in his room.

ADRIAN

Who's there?

From the shadows, a haunted voice.

DAN (O.S.)

It's me.

ADRIAN

Thank God. For a moment I thought... What do you need, Dan?

Dan leans back against a pillar. He takes a deep breath.

DAN

I need to kill you, Adrian. For what you've done.

Wary, Adrian's gets up, though his tone stays light. He wears boxer-briefs and a tight tank-top -- incredibly fit.

ADRIAN

I thought we were past all that. You can't turn me in.

ANGLE ON: DAN, moving through the shadows.

DAN
I don't want to turn you in.

ADRIAN
Fool. You're just like Rorschach.

In the shadows, Dan closes his eyes. Remembering his friend.

DAN
Thank you.

ADRIAN
What makes you think you'll succeed
where he failed?

DAN
Because Rorschach never found your
weapons closet.

Adrian becomes suddenly, actively alert.

ANGLE ON: DAN'S BELT, overlaid now by the PLASTIC-STEEL
EXOSKELETON CONSOLE. He activates it.

Adrian BOLTS for the wall-hanging, ornamental WEAPONS. He
grabs a POLE tipped with a long BLADE as DAN FLIES FROM THE
SHADOWS. The two men FIGHT, Dan's abilities augmented a
hundred-fold by the exoskeleton, Adrian simply doing what he
does best. The speed is blinding, the attacks brutal. They
smash each other around the mammoth room, Adrian taking the
worst. Eyes dancing with blood, it is Dan's greatest moment.

He KICKS Adrian in the face, knocking him into a table. A
lacquered BOX tumbles open, spilling Japanese THROWING
WEAPONS of all kinds to the floor. Dan, confident now, moves
forward. Adrian crawls away.

ADRIAN
I hope... this has been fun for
you. One last chance to be a hero.

Adrian SPINS, throwing a pencil-sized SPIKE INTO THE
EXOSKELETON'S CONSOLE. It SHORTS OUT, releasing Dan's frame.

ADRIAN (cont'd)
But you're just a man, like all the
rest. And men die. Every one.

Dan's face falls. Adrian, bloody now, rises. Adrian HAMMERS
DAN, blow after blow, killing him. Finally, he kicks Dan in
the face, knocking him to the ground.

Adrian moves in to finish him. Out of tricks, out of time, Dan searches his belt for something, anything. -- And finds one last retractable OWL-WING. The WINGS SNAP OUT. Desperate, he FLICKS IT AT ADRIAN...

... Who merely moves his head to the left. The WING WHIZZES HARMLESSLY PAST, disappearing into the dark room.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

Get up.

Dan struggles to his feet. Bloody... beaten.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

Before I do this... one last thing.
I have to ask you something.

DAN

Yeah? What's that?

ADRIAN

Why an Owl? I mean, assuming your intention is to intimidate the criminal element... What's so frightening about an owl?

DAN

Well... I guess it's cause... You just can't hear them coming.

Dan ducks. For a split-second, Adrian is baffled. Until -- having circled the huge room, the OWL-WING ZOOMS OUT OF THE DARKNESS, the OWL-FACE SCREECHING INTO FRAME --

-- And STRIKES ADRIAN IN THE CHEST, KNOCKING HIM OFF HIS FEET. Adrian SLAMS to the ground, the boomerang's left wing IMBEDDED in his Solar Plexus. He wheezes blood.

ADRIAN'S POV: UP on Dan. Growing dark. Adrian is dying.

ADRIAN

Dan, you can't... let me die...
How will... the world... survive?

DAN

We'll just have to struggle though,
I guess.

Adrian chokes. His vision of Dan FADES TO: BLACK

*

INT. KARNAK -- DINING ROOM -- DAWN

As pink dawn-light streams through the windows, Laurie sits at the big table, many EMPTY CHAMPAGNE BOTTLES before her. She looks ill, but not drunk. After last night, drunkenness can't overcome what she's seen. The news plays on the TV's.

Dan, beaten and bloody, practically falls down the stairs. She goes to him, helps him up.

DAN
I killed Adrian.

She touches his face, comforting.

LAURIE
Good.

Helping him walk, they head for the exit. On the news:

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
... As world leaders tensely await instructions from the mysterious "Black Boxes" sent in connection with the tragedy in America...

DAN
Hang on.

Dan types something into the table-keyboard. He hits SEND.

ANGLE ON: DAN AND LAURIE'S BACKS. They exit, but we remain, PANNING DOWN to show the COMPUTER SCREEN, and the MESSAGE that Dan has sent to all the world's powerful: And in the end... The love you take, is equal to the love you make.

EXT. NEPENTHE GARDENS -- POOL -- DAY

Dahlia Jupiter sits by the pool in her Karan shades and Prada suit. She reads down the PAPER. The headline: "FIRST WORLD PEACE SUMMIT COMMENCES. Unilateral Accords expected." An ATTENDANT approaches her.

POOL ATTENDANT
Ms. Jupiter. A mister and Mrs. Hollis to see you.

DAHLIA
Who?

LAURIE (O.S.)
Mr. and Mrs. Hollis.

Dahlia turns. Dan and Laurie are there. Dan has grown a beard, and they have both disguised their hair.

DAHLIA

Who?

LAURIE

It's Sam and Sandra -- Hollis.

DAHLIA

(laughs)

Of course. Come on in.

DAN

Well, not just us...

Dan wheels a STROLLER up to Dahlia's chair.

LAURIE

Meet your granddaughter, mom.
Yours... and Eddie Blake's.

Dahlia turns away. Laurie knows.

DAHLIA

Oh Jesus. What must you think? It
was an afternoon, he stopped by --

In FLASHES, we see: YOUNG EDDIE, standing at Dahlia's door.

YOUNG EDDIE BLAKE

Dahlia, I'm so sorry, I --

YOUNG Dahlia looks at him wryly, a BRUISE over her eye... but
even so... she smiles. Back in the PRESENT:

LAURIE

Mom... People's lives take them
strange places. You never did
anything wrong by me.

Laurie hugs her mother tightly. FADE TO:

EXT. NEPENTHE GARDENS -- POOL -- LATER

The three enjoy the bright California sunshine. Dahlia pours
herself a MARGARITA from the pitcher.

DAHLIA

(to Laurie)

You don't want a drink?

LAURIE

No thanks. I'm okay.

Surprised, Dahlia appraises her new, healthier and happier daughter as Dan continues the story.

DAN

We had to change our identities,
but it all worked out in the end.

LAURIE

Adrian never conceived that the
planet could go on without him.

DAN

But the leaders of the world were
too afraid to go back to the old
ways, instructions or no. As long
as no-one finds out who was behind
it, the threat remains, and the
world will be fine.

DAHLIA

Of course it will. Just fine.

Dahlia tickles her grandchild. CLOSE ON: THE BABY, smiling
despite Dahlia's TEARDROP which LANDS ON ITS CHEEK.

MATCH FADE TO:

INT. THE NEW FRONTIERSMAN -- DAY

A YELLOW SMILEY FACE, splotted with RED. A T-SHIRT stained
with ketchup. Seymour the corpulent ASSISTANT eats a burger.
Low music. Ominous... building.

EDITOR

SEYMOUR! Don't you have anything
to do? Jesus, millions killed and
you had to be in the suburbs.

SEYMOUR

I thought your column --

EDITOR

Wrong! Apparently, no-one can say
anything negative about *anybody*
thanks to these ass-kissing
accords.

SEYMOUR

I guess we'll have to run something
from the crank file.

EDITOR

Seymour! Take some initiative!
Just run whatever you want...

PAN DOWN ON: THE CRANK FILE, where RORSCHACH'S JOURNAL sits
amongst the piles. PUSH IN ON IT, Seymour's stained SMILEY
FACE T-SHIRT HUGE IN THE B/G. His hand reaching for it...

EDITOR (V.O.) (cont'd)

I leave it entirely in your hands.

FADE TO:

BLACK

WATCHMEN